

NEW SEASON TV PREVIEW!

Exclusive interviews! Supergirl, The Exorcist and loads more



THE
WORLD'S
No.1
SCI-FI
MAGAZINE

278

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE!**

**ON SET
MIKE COLTER
SPEAKS!**

MARVEL'S

LUKE CAGE

FIRST
DAREDEVIL
THEN
JESSICA JONES...

NOW
**POWER
MAN**

WHY HE'LL
BE YOUR NEXT
NETFLIX BINGE



**STAR
WARS:
ROGUE
ONE**

All the
news from
a galaxy far,
far away

**THE
WICKER
MAN**
Lost interview
with late director
Robin Hardy

25 PAGES OF UNMISSABLE TV ACTION



THE WALKING DEAD



ASH VS EVIL DEAD



THE FLASH



RED DWARF

STARRING...

Future

PLUS SUPERNATURAL * ARROW * GOTHAM * AGENTS OF SHIELD * WESTWORLD
LEGENDS OF TOMORROW * FEAR THE WALKING DEAD * THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE

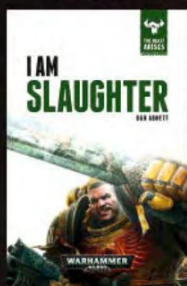
WARHAMMER 40,000



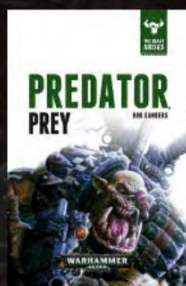
MANKIND'S LAST DITCH ATTEMPT TO CUT THE HEAD FROM THE ALIENS CONQUERING THE GALAXY HAS FAILED. MILITARY BRUTE FORCE MUST GIVE WAY TO NEW TACTICS IF THE IMPERIUM IS TO SURVIVE. FROM DEATH WILL COME A NEW ALIEN-HUNTING FORCE. A DEATHWATCH...

THE STORY SO FAR:

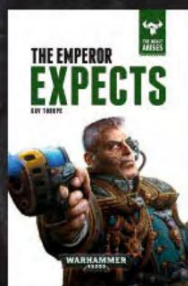
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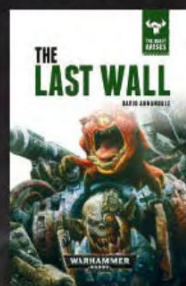
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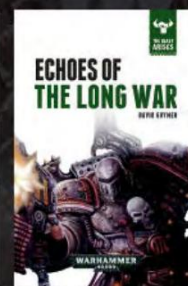
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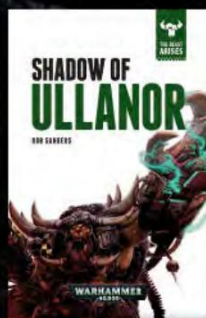


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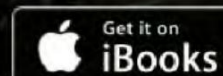
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LUKE CAGE

"He's haunted by certain things but at the same time he's driven by the greater good"



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STAR WARS"We're trying to fuse the looks of our show and the look of *Rogue One*"

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FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

"I wanna have a full-on Shakespearean death"

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SFX goes street level to get the intel on Marvel's latest small-screen superhero show.

54 UNMISSABLE TV PREVIEWThis is the big one, couch potatoes. Packed with chats with the makers of *Supergirl*, *Red Dwarf*, *Supernatural*, *The Walking Dead*, *Gotham*, *Agents of SHIELD*, *The Flash*, *Arrow* – and loads more!**64 TOM ELLIS**From *Miranda* to *Lucifer*: it's an audience with the dashing devil himself.**66 FEAR THE WALKING DEAD**

We venture into the second half of season two. Expect more afraidness than before.

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The woman behind some of the biggest sci-fi of the last 35 years on why she's now a telly addict.

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The soundtrack supremo tells us what's inspired him.

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How things are shaping up for a third season of Noo Yoik vampires.

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Tons of juicy things we found out in the San Diego wonderland.

► FIRST CONTACT**34 YOUR LETTERS**Behold the hottest of Hot Topics: the new *Ghostbusters* movie!**38 WISHLIST***Wolverine 3*, you say? Ideas from readers, you say? Right here.**► REVIEWS****92 STAR TREK BEYOND**A lifelong *Trek* fan gives his verdict on the new film.**98 CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR**

As it hits the small screen, we look again at Marvel's mega-movie.

► VIEWSCREEN**122 WAYWARD PINES**

That difficult second season.

► REGULARS**42 OPINION**

Author Robert Brockway thinks adaptations shouldn't always be faithful to source material.

44 BOOK CLUBAlastair Reynolds on *Schismatrix* by Bruce Sterling.**129 BLASTERMIND**

How well do you know your spin-off telly and films?

130 TOTAL RECALLThe Ed on why even the *sounds* of *Star Wars* are brilliant.**SUBSCRIBE TO SFX!**

Check out p46 for details

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Rants & Raves

INSIDE THE SFX HIVE MIND

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR RAVES

→ Really excited to be hosting a Ronald D Moore masterclass and a *Red Dwarf* screening at the Edinburgh International Television Festival on Wednesday 24 August. Get tickets at <http://bit.ly/Edtickets>.
→ I can't remember the last TV show I've loved as much as *Stranger Things*. Wonderful stuff.



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR RAVES

→ *Star Trek Beyond*: the villain felt first draft and some of the action beats lost me but the characters were spot-on – Kirk especially – and there was obvious love poured into it. Enjoyable.
→ The *Wonder Woman* trailer totally sold me. Something really fresh about a superhero movie with a WWI backdrop.



IAN BERRIMAN REVIEWS EDITOR RAVES

→ Went on-set for *Who* spin-off *Class* and am now much more excited about it – I think people are going to be surprised how dark it gets.
RANTS
→ *Discovery* is a decent name for a *Star Trek* series, but the ropery CGI of the ship in the teaser doesn't inspire much confidence.



JOSH WINNING NEWS EDITOR RAVES

→ Life before *Stranger Things* has become a shadowy wasteland. How did I ever cope before this show existed?
→ We now have to wait ages for *Stranger Things* season two. LIFE IS SO UNFAIR.
→ The new *Wonder Woman* trailer kicked serious ass. Can't wait for that Amazon delivery.



RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR RANTS (ISH)

→ Shame that the *Ghostbusters* film only took one risk. A more adventurous plot and zanier humour were needed. Good-natured though. Pity Murray and Aykroyd's cameos were rubbish!
→ Think I was too old for *The BFG*. But more urgency and peril would have been good. Maybe it's just an uncinematic book?



JONATHAN COATES ART EDITOR RAVES

→ *Stranger Things* was creepy and addictive. Loved that crackle effect on the titles too – made me nostalgic for videoshop VHS. Hopefully Winona will get a few lighter scenes in series two, but I wouldn't bank on it!
→ Watched the first excellent episode of *Luke Cage* and I can't wait for more. Power Man!



CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK ART EDITOR RAVES

→ Was completely hooked by *Stranger Things* – loved all the nods to a number of my favourite '80s films. Fingers crossed for a second season.
→ How creepy is James McAvoy in the new Shyamalan trailer for *Split*. Not sure I'll be able to keep track of his 29 split personalities.



WILL SALMON SPECIALS EDITOR RAVES

→ *Stranger Things* is great! Short, sweet and with enough heart to be more than just an '80s mega-mix.
→ Hey! We're launching a new horror mag. Issue one of *Horrorville* is out 25 August.
RANTS
→ My *Lost* rewatch has hit Nikki and Paolo...



SAM ASHURST WRITER RAVES

→ My horror short, *Hell's Garden*, will be showing at FrightFest in London this year. It's part of Short Film Showcase Three at Vue Shepherd's Bush, on 29 August, at 12:30pm. It's my directorial debut, so I'm just a bit excited!
RANTS
→ Having to wait until October for *Black Mirror* S3 on Netflix.



RHIAN DRINKWATER SUB-EDITOR RAVES

→ The new *Ghostbusters* was brilliant! And I might be a little (or a lot) in love with Holtzman.
→ I also really enjoyed *Star Trek Beyond* – such an improvement on *Into Darkness*.
→ Loved the Comic-Con trailers, especially for the *American Gods* TV series. One of my favourite books, can't wait to watch it.



This issue marks a first in SFX's 21-year history – never before has the mag featured a cover star from a TV series that doesn't air on a conventional network. These days, of course, streaming services like Netflix, Amazon and BBC iPlayer are as important a part of our viewing habits as an old-school TV channel – and event shows like *Stranger Things* and *The Man In The High Castle* create as much social media buzz as their terrestrial cousins.

That's why *Luke Cage*, the latest series to emerge from the same gritty Netflix branch of the MCU that's already spawned the fab *Daredevil* and *Jessica Jones*, is one of the most hotly anticipated shows of 2016. We sent our Nick on set in New York to find out how the latest member of the Defenders is shaping up (p48).

But when it comes to TV this issue, Mr Cage is just the tip of the iceberg. We've tracked down stars and showrunners of the biggest series on your telly this autumn, and demanded they give us their key intel for our Unmissable TV Preview (p54). Honestly, there's so many incoming shows it was physically impossible to fit all the interviews we wanted to in there.

Next issue we celebrate the return of *Red Dwarf*, with all the skinny on series XI and an exclusive celebratory mini-mag. Subscribe by 23 August (see p46) to make sure you don't miss that issue – or any of the other massive sci-fi that's heading your way.



See me on page 68

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
@RichDEdwards

RICH'S PICTURE BY LAUREN O'CALLAGHAN

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Red Alert

OCTOBER
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→ NEWS //// INTERVIEWS //// INSIGHT //// MONKEY → *edited by Josh Winning*

TV EXCLUSIVE!

BAD APPLE

Showrunner Carlton Cuse talks tackling the mean streets of New York in *The Strain* season three...



You may want to steer clear of New York City this summer – at least Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's version – because bloodsuckers are overtaking the Big Apple. Season three of *The Strain*, which is adapted from the duo's bestselling novels, finds our heroes scattered as the desperate search to stop the rampant strigoi plague hits a critical juncture.

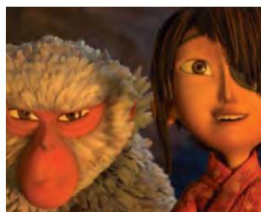
It's 23 days into the Master's (Robert Maillet) plan to overtake humanity and things are looking bleak for the good guys. Zach (Max Charles), the son of scientist Dr Ephraim "Eph" Goodweather (Corey Stoll), has been taken by Eph's vampire ex-wife, while vamp expert →

Highlights



14 AGAINST THE CLOCK

→ Matt Lanter chats getting heroic in new time-travel drama *Timeless*...



18 BOY WONDER

→ Prepare your eyeballs for the gorgeous *Kubo And The Two Strings*.



26 CON ARTISTS

→ Everything you need to know about what went down in San Diego.

SCI-FACT! Vasily Fet was originally written for Guillermo del Toro's buddy Ron Perlman.

“The stakes are massively high. The show feels relentless in a great way”

Professor Abraham Setrakian (David Bradley) is teaming up with the hybrid fanger, Mr Quinlan (Rupert Penry-Jones), to crack the Lumen text in hopes of wiping out the demon scourge.

“We’re in full-tilt war mode,” executive producer Carlton Cuse tells *Red Alert* of where the story picks up. “The stakes are massively high. The show feels relentless in a great way. Really, season three is the battle for New York, and ultimately as New York goes, so goes the world.”

In order to honour that intensity, Cuse says this year US network FX agreed to cut the episode count from 13 to 10. “It really accelerated the narrative velocity of the storytelling,” he explains. “Now there’s a kineticism to the show that’s really exciting.”

With the characters each on different, fraught journeys to find a way to stop the plague, Cuse reveals there’s more of a sense of a ticking clock for everyone. “Different members of our collective connect with each other at different times,” he says. “Fet [Kevin Durand] and Setrakian are together a lot. Dutch [Ruta Gedmintas] and Eph continue to find a scientific solution to the strigoi plague. She is instrumental in the evolution of their plan. Obviously, they made this bio-weapon last year and that story evolves and continues in some new and cool ways. She and Eph are really collaborators in that effort.”

However, Cuse admits that Eph’s focus will be challenged as he also tries to find his errant son. “Zach is with Kelly and that’s a major issue for Eph and a big piece of the drama,” Cuse explains. A polarising character for audiences, Zach is about to get a better understanding of the vampire world that intrigues him so much. “We see him get pulled into the world of the Master and Kelly,” Cuse teases. “Anybody who is held captive is potentially a victim of Stockholm Syndrome which is very interesting. To what degree does Zach find himself empathising with his mother and her cause? It’s definitely a big part of his storytelling. Zach’s journey this year is not typical of most kids on television and that’s what we love about it.”

Meanwhile, Setrakian, Fet, Quinlan, Gus (Miguel Gomez) and Angel (Joaquín Cosío) are with the Lumen as the Master’s army are in pursuit. Cuse laughs about this motley group:



These two are *not* in for a nice day at the park.

“They’d make an interesting dinner party, except Quinlan would be drinking a goat so that’d be less than appealing to everyone else.”

As for the group’s collective quest for knowledge, Cuse adds, “The key for those guys is can they decipher the Lumen, and does it hold the answer to how to kill the Master? It definitely pays off in a big way across the season. Setrakian puts a lot of effort into figuring out what’s going on there. The Lumen is very much in play and there’s information in it that’s very important.”

GOING DEEPER

Despite the loss of Mia Maestro’s Nora at the end of season two, *The Strain* still boasts a sprawling ensemble of characters. Cuse adds that, aside from the addition of a Navy SEAL character named Kroft and another NYPD character, the show will get a little more introspective in its third year. “What we did this season is dig in deeper on some of the [existing] characters, like we’re going to learn more about Quinlan and his backstory,” he reveals. “We have so many characters that we felt we have room to learn more about them, so it’s less about new cast.”

As fans just settle into this new season of terror, though, Cuse, del Toro and Hogan are already looking ahead to the next season, which started pre-production in July. Excited of what’s to come, but wary of spoilers, Cuse only reveals: “I just finished having a series of creative conversations with del Toro about what we’re going to do in season four. There will be a time jump for sure, sometime in season four. We’ll do ten [episodes again] next season. I feel like we’re getting to a really exciting place in our journey.” It’s enough to get the blood pumping. ●

The Strain season three will air on FX in the US from 28 August, and on W in the UK soon after.





Only one of these men looks a lot like Tony Stark.



Fet and Abraham Setrakian (David Bradley) catch up on their reading.



Samantha Mathis as driven councilwoman Justine Feraldo.



FIGHTING FET

Kevin Durand on peeling the onion that is Vasily Fet...

Is Fet still working well with others or is he ready to go it alone this season?

→ He's got very strong ideas about how to solve this giant, wormy problem. He teams up with some new folk and still works with some of the old folk. Like always, he looks up to Setrakian and always listens to what he has to say, and is right by his side, but he's also chasing down these new ideas.

It's been three seasons but the time frame of the narrative is barely a month. How do you keep Fet true to who he is, yet allow him to grow?

→ It's funny. At the start of the season, I registered it's only been 23 days but it's not like we're hanging out in Malibu. We're all pretty sure we're going to die at any second because the stakes are so high. You're forced to evolve quickly or die. But that being said, it is a short period of time and how much you can evolve, we explore that.

Do we get more about Fet's background?

→ Gratefully, the writers really sunk their claws into Fet and peeled the onion. As an actor, I'm so grateful we get to look inside more and see what he's made up of. He had some really horrible situations that let us see how he comes through on the other end of them.

Fet's a fighter and the enemy is getting nastier. Will anything break his confidence?

→ It gets pretty gnarly this year. These strigoi are getting smarter, faster and stronger. The hierarchy of how they evolve is scary. It really doesn't look good for anyone walking around with actual human organs functioning inside.

SCI-FACT! Luke Scott convinced Kate Mara to join *Morgan* on the set of his father's film *The Martian*.

DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

WEIRD SCIENCE

The cast and crew of *Morgan* talk the making of a monster...

➔ If you've seen the trailer for *Morgan*, the new sci-fi thriller from Luke Scott (son of director Ridley), chances are you're thinking of *Ex Machina*. After all, it is about an artificial being who has been created in a lab – the titular humanoid who must be assessed by deadly risk-management consultant Lee Weathers (Kate Mara) to determine whether she's dangerous or not. But, as Scott says, trailers can be deceptive.

"*Ex Machina* came out just as I was beginning to shoot *Morgan* and there was that little moment where my heart jumped," he laughs. "But actually the stories are very different. For a start, *Morgan* is not a robot, but genetically modified – it focuses on what happens when an organism has its physical and mental attributes pumped up. Also, *Ex Machina* is a terrific movie but *Morgan* is more of a romp. It's got more action in it."

Indeed, it's fair to say that *Ex Machina* didn't feature what Kate Mara describes as a "massive, massive fight sequence that goes on for almost 30 minutes" between the super-human *Morgan* and Mara's own cold, highly-trained killer consultant. "We shot it in so many different locations as it goes on for quite some time," she tells us. "It was the most stunts I've ever been involved in."

Joining Mara are an impressive range of stars – including Toby Jones, Rose Leslie, Michelle Yeoh and Paul Giamatti. But the most interesting member is *Morgan* herself, Anya Taylor-Joy, whose role as Thomasin in horror hit *The Witch* made her a breakout star. It's a role, Taylor-Joy says, that she ended up connecting to on a personal level.

"*Morgan* is a genetically engineered human being but that's the key thing: she's human and

not a machine," she tells Red Alert. "She bleeds, she cries, she reacts to things. It wasn't until I started to make movies that I stopped feeling alone and alienated, so I identified with her. It's pretty close to why I identified with Thomasin, which is that she feels isolated from everyone behind glass. And the difference is that [*Morgan*] has a genuine sheet of glass rather than my metaphorical one."

Morgan is Luke Scott's directorial debut – a project that follows his short film *Loom* in 2012, and work as Second Unit Director on *Exodus: Gods And Kings*, directed by his father. Trying to follow in the shoes of the man

who directed *Alien* is obviously a daunting task, yet being Ridley Scott's son does have its advantages – namely that Ridley Scott is producing.

"He's a good person to have on board," says Scott Jr. "Having that access is obviously an amazing thing. You have a wealth of experience to tap into, and you're able to learn from the old master. But he really let me get on with it, as he had his own movies to get on with. What was interesting was showing him it for the first time. It was very nerve-wracking to get that approval. But he liked it. I was actually surprised at how much he liked it. He can be over-critical, but he really got it. I mean, he put his name on it, thank god!" ●

Morgan opens in cinemas on 2 September.

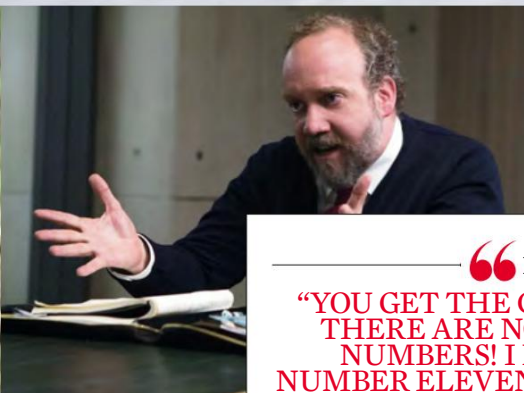
“The key thing is that *Morgan* is human and not a machine”



These fun house mirrors really weren't that fun.

If you go down to the woods today...





Paul Giamatti is just one of a pretty stellar cast.

“DON'T QUOTE ME”
 “YOU GET THE CALL SHEETS AND THERE ARE NO NAMES – ONLY NUMBERS! I REALLY LOVED NUMBER ELEVEN’S WORK ON THEIR PREVIOUS FILM...”

Mark Hamill on how *Star Wars* films keep their secrets.

GETTY



AERIAL ASSAULT SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

→ **Stranger Things** producer Shawn Levy is “definitely hopeful to go several more seasons”. Us, too.
 → **Game Of Thrones** season seven is expected to air late in 2017. The show will only run for 13 more episodes.
 → Bryan Fuller’s **Star Trek: Discovery** TV show will air on Netflix in the UK.
 → **Wynonna Earp** has been renewed for a 10-episode second season.
 → Season six of **Teen Wolf** will be its last – it will conclude with its 100th ep in 2017.
 → New episodes of **Daredevil** and **Jessica Jones** unlikely before 2018, says Netflix boss Ted Sarandos. No fair!
 → **Serenity** is returning in comic **Serenity: No Power In The Verse**, written by Chris Roberson and illustrated by Georges Jeanty.
 → Samira Wiley has joined Hulu’s 10-episode **A Handmaid’s Tale**, from showrunner Bruce Miller.
 → **Black Mirror** series three will air from 21 October in the UK.



MARK “RHINO” SMITH

THE BODYBUILDER-TURNED-**GLADIATOR**-TURNED-ACTOR ON HIS SF FAVOURITES...

Favourite SF/fantasy film

→ *Flash Gordon* is great. As a kid, I loved all the crazy trials and tribulations they had to go through to defeat the bad guys. And I loved the ending when Flash killed Ming the Merciless. It’s funny because in *Argo*, my character was based on him. Ben Affleck put me in the same red cloak and beard, then sat me next to John Goodman during the table read of the film within the film. It was crazy, but I got to channel my childhood dream!

Favourite SF/fantasy TV show

→ *The X-Files* was a great show. It always left you wanting more, like *Breaking Bad* did; you had to watch the next episode. Actually, I know David Duchovny because we have the same manager. There’s *X-Files* posters all over her office. He’s a lovely guy, quite different to Mulder! He’s always telling jokes.

Guilty SF/fantasy pleasure

→ Someone of my build, I probably shouldn’t be shouting from the rooftops that I like *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, but I really like that show! It’s more teenage girls who used to jump on that show, so I don’t know if it’d be frowned upon by young Herculean men that I’m a fan!

Favourite SF/fantasy character

→ I feel like I relate to the Hulk. He’s big, he’s powerful, he just runs through things. I did that on *Gladiators* as Rhino. I’m the only Gladiator in the whole world who had my nickname before the show. I won the junior British bodybuilding championship in 1989, and the name stuck. So the Hulk, man. I can relate to him. He’s serious!

Day Of The Dead is out in 2017.



SCI-FACT! Lanter voiced Anakin Skywalker in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.



FIVE MINUTES WITH...

MATT LANTER

The *Timeless* star talks playing a badass time-travelling soldier...

ROGUE WARRIOR

“I drew a lot from Han Solo and Indiana Jones. I wanted to present Wyatt as a badass, but I still wanted that touch of humour like Han Solo. That’s what people love about those characters. They are so effortlessly cool and that’s how I hope this character comes off.”

MAN OF MYSTERY

“We don’t know exactly why Wyatt is there. We know he’s Delta Force, but we don’t know if he’s currently active or why the government picked him out of all those military personnel they could have gotten.”

LETHAL WEAPON

“One of my good friends growing up, his brother used to be in the army. He told us he had to register his hands with the government as a deadly weapon. At the time, I was like, ‘That is so cool!’ I think about that with Wyatt. This guy is so highly-trained, with an expertise level of basically killing with his bare hands if he needs to.”

TIME TRAVEL CONUNDRUM

“We’re going to see Wyatt struggle with getting the mission done or fulfilling his emotional desires, particularly dealing with his dead wife. Now that he has the ability to travel back in time, why would he not try to undo what has happened?”

PAST TENSE

“I would love to do some Civil War stuff. There are so many emotional things happening in the Civil War that would affect Rufus (Malcolm Barrett), with the slavery issue, the north versus the south and brother versus brother. It’s so powerful and the birth of our nation.”

Timeless will air on NBC in the US from 3 October.



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SCI-FACT! *Aftermath* showrunner William Laurin also had a cameo in an episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*.



ACTOR EXCLUSIVE

APOCALYPSE NEW

Meteors, disease, demons... James Tupper reveals the topsy-turvy world of new Syfy series *Aftermath*

➔ With so many apocalypse-themed shows on television at the moment, it seems unlikely that anyone could find a new take on this well-explored subgenre. Nonetheless, Syfy will attempt that with its new science fiction-meets-supernatural series *Aftermath*. The show debuts this autumn and isn't going to tell a typical end-of-days story, according to star James Tupper (*Revenge*). "It's a little bit of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* mixed with a family sitcom," he says. "It's really fresh in terms of the idea of the show."

Tupper plays Joshua Copeland, a university professor interested in ancient religions. While trying to survive with his three children and wife, Karen, a former military pilot, Copeland investigates the mystery behind the events surrounding the collapse of world order. The part is a dream come true, says Tupper, who has always wanted to play an action hero. Yet he reveals that, in a reversal of traditional roles, it will be Karen, played by his real-life spouse Anne

Heche, who does most of the ass-kicking. "She never walks through a door, for instance. She just boots it open," says Tupper.

How the Copelands' tight bonds help them handle a variety of dangers will be one of the main themes of *Aftermath*, explains co-creator William Laurin (*Alfred Hitchcock Presents*).

"They come in loving each other and so as the shock mounts, it has a double impact. One is the impact that you get out of terrifying events and the other is, 'God, that's happening to my mum!'"

Where the dysfunctional relationships in *Fear The Walking Dead* are a microcosm of the breakdown of civilisation, the Copelands will be a source of optimism.

"The world is falling to pieces but we have a sense that somehow, possibly, it could be survived if you make the right choices and you learn the right knowledge," Laurin says. "It's not at all a nihilistic show, which most apocalypse shows are." ●

Aftermath will premiere on Syfy in the US later this year.



AWARDS NEWS

FANTASTIC FANTASY

The nominees for this year's **Gemmell Awards** have been announced...

➔ **The shortlists for the Gemmell Awards 2016** have been announced, with the likes of Miles Cameron, Larry Correia and David Guymer leading the nominations for the Legend Award for best novel. Meanwhile, the Morningstar Award for best debut has been bumped to six nominees this year, thanks to overwhelming support for some of the new talent out there. Nominees include Stephen Aryan for *Battlemage*, Francesca Haig for *The Fire Sermon* and Sabaa Tahir for *Ember In The Ashes*.

"2015 was a strong year for speculative fiction in general," says chair/co-treasurer Stan Nicholls. "We're seeing the emergence of a number of new, younger voices, which is always good, as well as excellent work from established writers."

On the art front, the Ravenheart Award for best cover include nods for the fantastic work by Raymond Swanland for *Archaeon: Lord Of Chaos* (by Rob Sanders) and Paul Young for *Ruin* (by John Gwynne).

Nicholls adds: "Whenever we have to make a decision about the awards, we've often asked ourselves, 'What would Dave [Gemmell] have wanted?' And we're confident that he would have approved of the awards being determined by an open vote. He respected his readers and trusted in their wisdom. This is all the more relevant, and poignant, as 28 July 2016 was the 10th anniversary of his death." ●

Winners will be announced on 24 September. For more info visit www.gemmellawards.com.

SCI-FACT! The original Suicide Squad team debuted in *The Brave And The Bold* #25, way back in 1959.



AFTERLIFE CELEBRATING ICONIC SCI-FI STARS

120

STEPHEN MANLEY

Young Spock in Star Trek III: The Search For Spock



Stephen Manley was handpicked by Leonard Nimoy to play the pivotal role of a 17-year-old Spock recovered from the Genesis planet in the director's soulful *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock* (1984). His enactment of the Vulcan "blood burning" reproductive cycle of pon farr with model Robin Curtis (who played Saavik) was a highlight. We spoke to the actor at his LA home.

Would you like to play the role again?

→ Of course – I could pon farr with Robin for the rest of eternity!

What's the strangest request you've had from a fan?

→ I haven't had outrageous requests. When fans take a picture with me and we pon farr together they usually go blood red and jump up and down!

Did you get any set souvenirs?

→ Yes: one set of ear tips.

Would any of your character's skills have been useful in real life?

→ Considering I was pon farring with Robin I'm sure that would have come in useful for a much more colourful youth!

Is there anything from the movie you wish was real?

→ It'd be wonderful if we were already in the time period that *Star Trek* takes place. A lot of the problems we have now would be completely solved.

What would it say on his gravestone?

→ I overdosed on pon farr!



WRITER EXCLUSIVE

CHAIN GANG CAPERS

Rob Williams and Jim Lee elevate *Suicide Squad* to the big league

→ "This is a comic with energy and a punk aesthetic," says writer Rob Williams. "It's going to make a sarcastic comment, hit you in the face and look good doing it!"

With its release timed to coincide with this month's highly anticipated cinematic outing, the latest incarnation of DC's answer to the Dirty Dozen packs a punch like no previous run. Written by Williams and illustrated by leading artists Jim Lee and Philip Tan, the bi-weekly title is intended to elevate the band of misfits to the front and centre of the DC Universe, and will feature a roster similar to the big screen line-up.

"Any book lives or dies on their cast, and the Suicide Squad are such fun to write," Williams tells Red Alert. "They're villains, they don't like

each other, and they absolutely hate their boss, Amanda Waller. There are all kinds of insane dynamics between them, as Harley Quinn is crazy, Boomerang's a selfish coward, Deadshot is the world's greatest assassin, and Killer Croc just wants to eat everyone!"

While he refuses to confirm its precise nature, the first arc will see the team attempting to solve the mystery of the Black Vault. "They're sent on a mission to retrieve an unknown item from a secret undersea prison in the Laptev Sea near Russia," reveals Williams. "What they find there will change everything. Not just for them, but potentially the whole planet." ●

Suicide Squad: Rebirth #1 is published on 3 August and Suicide Squad #1 on 17 August.

SCI-FACT! Travis Knight's father, Phil, is the founder and chairman of Nike.

DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

PUPPET MASTER

Director Travis Knight talks us through the concept art from Laika's latest stop-motion wonder, *Kubo And The Two Strings*...

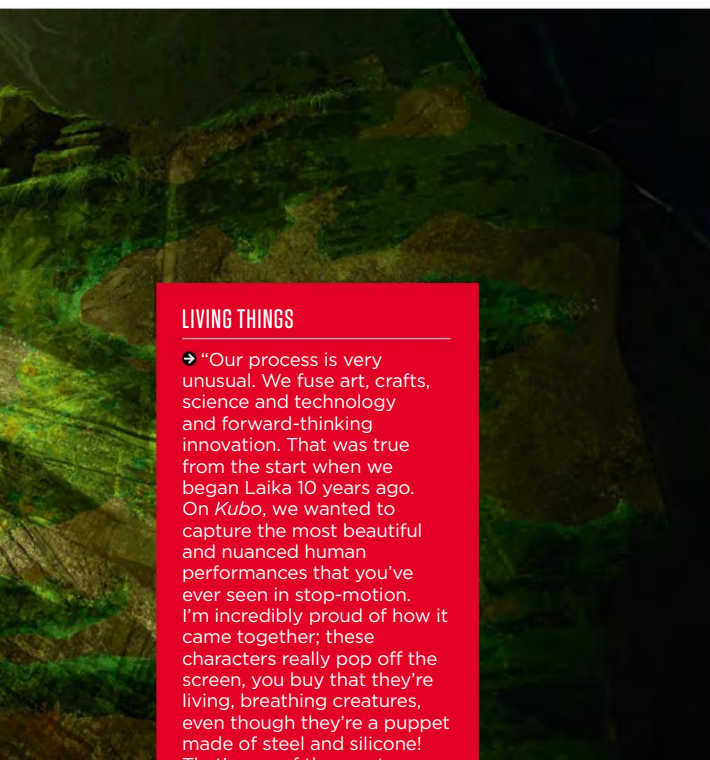
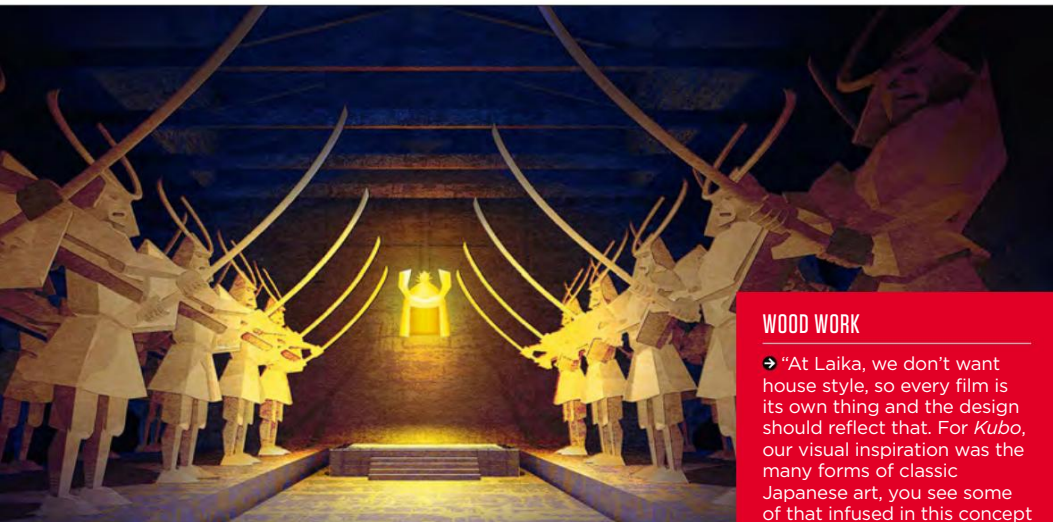
FANTASY EPIC

→ "We started developing *Kubo* five years ago; the pace of these things is glacial! We were still in production on *ParaNorman*, and the original idea sprang from the mind of our character designer Shannon Tindle, who imagined this incredible, sweeping samurai epic. It was just a really cool concept we'd never seen before. It spoke to me in a meaningful way because when I was a kid I was an enormous fan of fantasy epics. I loved Tolkien, *Star Wars*, Greek and Norse mythology. With *Kubo*, we had a canvas with which we could paint in those same colours."

THREE'S COMPANY

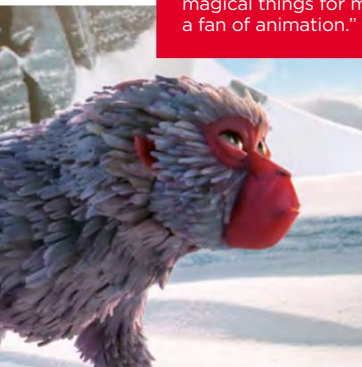
→ "This is an odd assortment of heroes! Kubo [voiced by Art Parkinson] is the son of a goddess and through a variety of mistakes, he causes this ancient evil to come storming down after him, so he goes on the run. He goes on a quest to save himself and reunite his family. Along the way he meets Monkey [voiced by Charlize Theron], who is this savage sword-wielding monkey, whose design was based on a Japanese macaque, and then Beetle [voiced by Matthew McConaughey], who's this big, brawny, befuddled man-bug. His design was a fusion of a stag beetle and a Japanese rhinoceros beetle."





LIVING THINGS

→ "Our process is very unusual. We fuse art, crafts, science and technology and forward-thinking innovation. That was true from the start when we began Laika 10 years ago. On *Kubo*, we wanted to capture the most beautiful and nuanced human performances that you've ever seen in stop-motion. I'm incredibly proud of how it came together; these characters really pop off the screen, you buy that they're living, breathing creatures, even though they're a puppet made of steel and silicone! That's one of the most magical things for me as a fan of animation."



WOOD WORK

→ "At Laika, we don't want house style, so every film is its own thing and the design should reflect that. For *Kubo*, our visual inspiration was the many forms of classic Japanese art. Some of the main influences were origami and ink-wash paintings, but the biggest was Ukiyo-e, which literally means 'pictures of the floating world'. The most prominent form of that is the classic Japanese wood block print, so we drew inspiration from the masters like Hokusai and Hiroshige; we wanted *Kubo* to look like a moving wood block print."

GOING APE

→ "Monkey is a guardian figure. She becomes a stand-in for Kubo's mother and she's stern and tough love and no-nonsense, so there's a family dynamic with these very strange characters. We started working with Charlize three years ago; she gives an extraordinary performance. She's really tough, she's funny, she's also really vulnerable and gives this beautiful, soulful performance. That becomes the foundation for all the physical acting, which our animators do; there's basically two sides to a performance - what you see, and what you hear."

NEW AUTHOR

JAMES BENNETT

MEET THE MAN WHOSE HERO IS A DRAGON THAT CAN SHAPESHIFT INTO HUMAN FORM!



Chasing Embers is "contemporary fantasy" - how close is it to our world?

→ Pretty close, although it *isn't* our world, not entirely. It's our world as if mythological creatures actually existed.

Tell us about your dragon protagonist. Fiery temper? Red-hot lover? Handy to have around when you need a campfire starting?

→ All three! Though for the latter, Ben Garston might take out some of the surrounding forest too. And getting involved with him could get you killed...

What was your thinking about how a dragon would talk?

→ When I first heard Ben in my head, he was world-weary, hungover and wryly self-deprecating. He's been through a lot. In human form, Ben sounds like any other grumpy Londoner! In dragon form, a tad more growly.

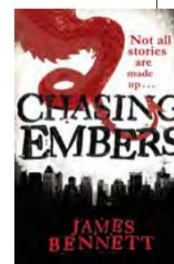
Did anything particular inspire the book?

→ After writing three novels that previously got rejected, I decided to write something for pure fun. I wasn't taking the story too seriously back then.

What plans do you have for future books?

→ There are two follow-ups planned. These will expand on the Remnant world and its increasing conflict with humans. Things will get darker and the stakes higher, but I'm hoping each book can work as a fun and fiery standalone! Think Bond, but with dragons!

Chasing Embers is published by Orbit on 8 September.



Kubo And The Two Strings opens on 9 September.

SCI-FACT! Merry in *A Head Full Of Ghosts* was named after Merricat from Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived In The Castle*.

Tremblay describes himself as a magpie picking through the scraps of a lifetime of reading and film-watching.

AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

RITE STUFF

Paul Tremblay's *A Head Full Of Ghosts* scares up some new twists on exorcism stories...

➔ Most horror fans will agree that *The Exorcist* ruined possession stories forever. William Peter Blatty's definitive spook-fest was so thrilling/horrifying/unforgettable that anything crawling along in its wake couldn't hope to escape its shadow. That's why, when author Paul Tremblay decided to write his own possession story, he resolved to confront *The Exorcist* head on. "Once I decided that I wouldn't ignore the Blatty elephant in the room, it freed me up to roll around in the many tropes of possession stories and horror narratives in general," he tells Red Alert.

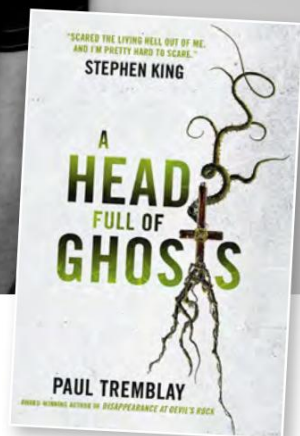
Tremblay's book, *A Head Full Of Ghosts*, puts a post-modern (head) spin on the traditional exorcism fable. Told from the point-of-view of eight-year-old Merry, it tracks in nerve-splitting detail the supposed possession of her 14-year-old sister, Marjorie. To complicate things, Marjorie's "possession" is being serialised on

reality TV, and as the eerie happenings build to a head, Merry's family starts to splinter around her. But is Marjorie really possessed?

The book also time-jumps forward to an older Merry, and contains blog posts by somebody rewatching the reality TV show. "All of it adds to [a] creeping sense of ambiguity," Tremblay says, "to the idea that reality isn't as stable or easily identifiable as we like to think."

Of course, all of that would be for nothing if the book wasn't pant-wettingly terrifying. "I honestly had no idea if this novel would scare anyone," Tremblay admits. "Early on, my agent told me an editor called him after 11pm and said, 'I just read the tongue scene and I need to talk to someone to hear their voice.' I pumped my fist and said, 'Yes!'" ●

A Head Full Of Ghosts is published by Titan on 27 September.



WRITER EXCLUSIVE

GET JACK

John Barrowman hopes new *Torchwood* comic could pave way for TV return

➔ "We want to put *Torchwood* back on the screen, and the fans need to know that now," John Barrowman tells Red Alert. "That's why we're doing this [comic]. I want Captain Jack back on screen. Fans want him. I think somebody missed a trick when they didn't continue with it. All I'll say is I have a phone call, and I'm speaking with somebody about the future..."

While we cross our fingers, there's the small matter of that aforementioned comic, which Barrowman has written with his sister Carole. The duo previously collaborated on *Torchwood* novel *Exodus Code*, and the new story picks up after that. "We said, 'If we're going to create the new *Torchwood*, let's take the core team who are left,'" explains John, "and that's Jack, Gwen and Rhys. They're the soul of the story moving forward, but we're bringing new people into it."

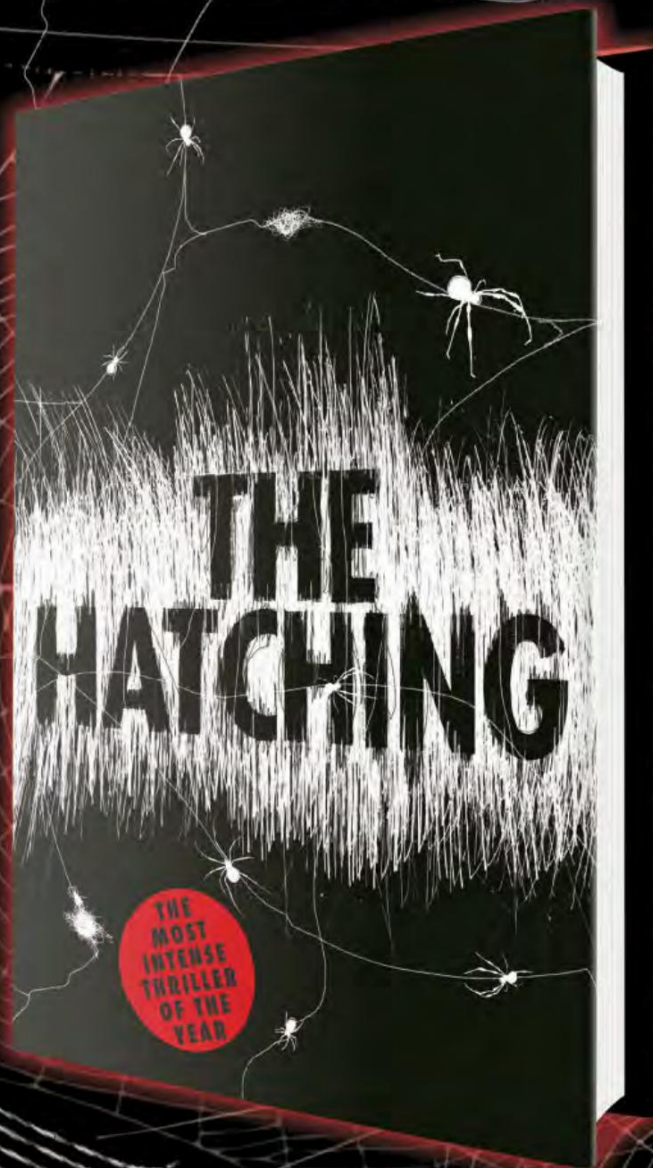
As for the opportunity to venture into storytelling arenas impossible on a TV budget...

"It's pretty darn cool," says Carole.

"One thing I take from Russell [T Davies] is you write it like it's a feature film, and then you start cutting back," adds John. "With this the artists just need to figure out how to make it work and look good. That's the beauty of doing comics." ●

Torchwood is out now from Titan Comics.

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#thehatching

05.07.2016

SCI-FACT! *Moana* will feature songs from both Lin-Manuel Miranda (*Hamilton*) and Mark Mancina.



Johnson plays Maui alongside Auli'i Cravalho as teen navigator Moana.

DIRECTORS EXCLUSIVE

ROCK SOLID

Directors Ron Clements and John Musker talk casting Dwayne Johnson in Disney's adventure epic *Moana*...

➔ **It's said that the Hawaiian demi-god Maui was a huge man – one capable of throwing a fish hook up to the sun, or raising entire islands out of the ocean.** So when it came to casting him in Disney's new animated film *Moana*, there was only one man for the job: the artist formerly known as The Rock, Dwayne Johnson.

"He's a bigger-than-life character just like Maui," laughs co-director Ron Clements, "and they both have cool tattoos. He also has roots deep in the South Pacific. His mother came to a recording session and was crying when she heard one of our songs, which was a celebration of South Pacific culture. Dwayne sings a song too. He did great with it."

Maui takes the role of mentor in *Moana*, aiding the title character – voiced by newcomer Auli'i Cravalho – in her quest across the ocean to find a fabled island. Clements, who co-directs alongside John Musker, describes its combination of humour, heart and music as similar to *The Lion King*. "But it's not a romance," he says. "Moana and Maui have more of a *True Grit* type of relationship."

Clements and Musker, who have directed Disney classics such as *Aladdin*, pitched an early version of the idea in 2011 to John Lasseter, who "forced" them to visit the South Pacific for research. "It made a huge

difference," says Musker. "We went to Tahiti and places like that and we took a lot away from Polynesian mythology – that many people consider the Pacific ocean almost alive, that it had feelings, it had emotions. Wouldn't it be great to realise that in animation?"

Indeed. But a challenge for Clements and Musker was that this was their first time dealing with CGI animation, as opposed to hand-drawn. "We've got 2D elements too," says Clements. "Maui has tattoos that move and one particular one is a miniature version of himself that appears on his body and becomes his alter ego. Eric Goldberg, who animated the genie on *Aladdin*, helped us animate him. But [with CGI], we were able to bring the ocean to life in a way which would be impossible to do otherwise. It's been a new experience. We kind of had to go back to school and learn this whole new process. It was really cool, though. This movie has a huge scope – more than I think we've ever done." ●

Moana opens in cinemas on 2 December.

“DON'T QUOTE ME”

“WHEN I SEE SOMEBODY CONSTANTLY MOVING THE CAMERA AND PUTTING IN LOUD EXPLOSIONS EVERY TWO SECONDS, TO ME IT'S LIKE DESPERATION.”

Brad Bird isn't a fan of OTT action cinema.



NEWS
WARP

HIGH-SPEED
FACTS

➔ **Lights Out** will get a sequel! Director David F. Sandberg is returning with producer James Wan. No word on the cast yet.
➔ Disney-owned Foodles production company pleads guilty to breaches of health and safety law over **Harrison Ford's** injury on *The Force Awakens* set.
➔ Meryl Streep has joined **Mary Poppins Returns**.
➔ Chris Evans may be playing **Dr Jekyll** and **Mr Hyde** in Lionsgate's *Jekyll* movie.
➔ "It's possible that ship has sailed," says Michael Keaton of **Beetlejuice 2**. Boo!
➔ **Rogue One** definitely won't feature Han Solo or Hayden Christensen, according to Gareth Edwards.
➔ "Baby Groot's an extremely important character for me in the movie," James Gunn says about **Guardians of the Galaxy 2**.
➔ Michael Fassbender promises **Alien: Covenant** will be "much scarier" than *Prometheus*.



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Bathe your eyes in wonder

SCI-FACT! The *Blade Runner* sequel will also star Ryan Gosling, Robin Wright and Dave Bautista.



TENSE FUTURE

It's over a year until we'll finally be reunited with Rick Deckard in *Blade Runner 2*, but this concept art for the film has suitably whet our appetite. Or should that be wet? In a clear nod to the original film, this is a decidedly drizzly vision of the future where, according to new director Denis Villeneuve, the world's become a dangerous place of acid rain and deadly weather hazards. We can't wait.

SMEG-O LAND

Ever wondered what Dave Lister, Arnold Rimmer, Cat and Kryten would look like made of Lego? Well wonder no more! Brick-lover Bob Turner has created his own new Lego set inspired by *Red Dwarf*, and he's looking to get it funded via Lego Ideas. With over 6,000 supporters at time of press, it surely won't be long before we'll all be having a go. Visit <http://bit.ly/sfxlego> for more info.



STAR ATTRACTION

Last month it was announced that *Star Wars*-themed lands are coming to Disneyland and Walt Disney World Resorts, and now we've had our first glimpse at the ridiculously cool concept art. This shot shows off the final look of one of the attractions, which is being built in the place of what was the Big Thunder Trail in Frontierland. If we don't see X-wings in the skies above Florida we'll be very upset...



Six years
ago she lost
everything.

Now,
she will
have her
revenge.

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or George R.R. Martin,
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#NEVERNIGHT

COMIC-CON

CON IN 60 SECONDS (GIVE OR TAKE)

Your essential crib sheet for the biggest news that broke at this year's **San Diego Comic-Con**

So which one will crack the most jokes?

➔ The entertainment world descended on Southern California in late July for its annual celebration of all things geek. While you could quite happily have spent the whole four and a bit days in a convention bubble, dressing up as Rey or Deadpool (the most popular cosplay choices, we reckon), sampling the culinary delights of Starbucks and mediocre cookies, or spending a couple of years' salary on collectables, toys and comics, there was news a-brewin' in Southern California. More than enough to fill a four-page feature, in fact – here are the big stories that got us properly excited at this year's San Diego Comic-Con...

GETTY (2)

STAR TREK: DISCOVERY

● The new *Star Trek* TV series has a name – and it's *Discovery*. The title was revealed at a panel celebrating 50 years of *Trek*, where the ship that'll give the show its name was also unveiled via a flyby teaser reel. It's a bit of a departure from the traditional

Federation craft, with echoes of Ralph McQuarrie's designs for an aborted '70s *Trek* movie and, to our eyes, a hint of a Klingon Bird of Prey in the wings. It'll be interesting to see what this means for the show, which some rumours have suggested will be set in the aftermath of *Star Trek VI*.

As for the human side of the show, showrunner Bryan Fuller said that, "We're telling stories in a brand new way. We're telling the story like a novel" – referring to the fact the show will stream, and that one story will unfold across an entire season. He also told San Diego that he believes part of the show's mission is to be inclusive: "I feel like what the new series has to do is continue to be progressive, continue to push boundaries. To continue telling stories in the legacy that Gene Roddenberry promised, which is giving us hope for a future."



Can you believe that Shatner is 85? Eighty-five!

DC

After *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* managed to disappoint a frighteningly large proportion of the people who saw it, DC had a fair bit of catching up to do as it unveiled the next entries from its own cinematic universe.

It was probably a good thing, then, that they brought *Wonder Woman* along, seeing as Diana Prince was undoubtedly one of the best things about *BvS*. The trailer – very much a period World War I affair – looked a treat, and suggested that the first movie headlined by a female superhero since 2004's *Elektra* is going to be well worth the wait. Slightly bittersweet, however, is the news that *Wonder Woman*'s preferred mode of transport will not be making an appearance: “The invisible jet is not in this movie, but it might be in the future,” confirmed director Patty Jenkins.

Justice League director Zack Snyder, who rarely misses an opportunity to take to the Hall H stage (who knows, he may even hang around there when Comic-Con's not on), also unveiled a teaser from his new movie. The good news is, it's got more humour in its brief running time than *BvS* managed in two and a half hours. A great iconic picture of the *Justice League* has been released too – even if that's a pretty big spoiler that Henry Cavill's Superman's back from the dead. Like we hadn't guessed.

In news for the “didn't we know that already?” column, Ben Affleck was officially confirmed as the star and director of a standalone *Batman* film. “It's really inspiring,” said Affleck. “It's like taking on a great play. It's been reinvented so many times, it's terrifying but it's exciting.”

And *Aquaman* director James Wan hinted at his vision for the wettest of superhero movies.



Diana Prince will make World War I a better place.

“Fucking Aquaman! What can I say?” *The Conjuring* director said. “Aquaman's such an amazing character. I love the fact that he's never really been portrayed in the feature movie world before... and the opportunity to explore this universe, you know, bring a bit of my horror element into this. The deep sea is a scary world. And then also explore the wondrous world of Atlantis.”

In the Marvel v DC battle, we'd say honours were just about even. (See Marvel's offering over the page...)



Snyder, Affleck and Gadot smiled more than in *BvS*.



The new ship of *Discovery* is revealed.

VALERIAN

With TV shows like *Game Of Thrones* and *The Walking Dead* dominating the Hall H schedule on the Friday, and the big Marvel/DC movies gobbling up the Saturday, Thursday at Comic-Con was a strangely subdued affair – who'd have thought Oliver Stone's Edward Snowden biopic would be Comic-Con fodder?

The good news, however, was that it meant there was room for Luc Besson to bring along footage from *Valerian And The City Of A Thousand Planets*, plus stars Dane DeHaan and Cara Delevingne. An adaptation of a French comic, it's reportedly the biggest European movie ever made. A good job, then, that James Cameron has offered him support – even if the Frenchman accepts his movie won't rival *Avatar* at the box office. “It's like running with Usain Bolt,” Besson said. “He is going to win, but you're going to be scared of me.” ➔



They're off to a thousand planets, you know.

SCI-FACT! After *Enterprise*, *Discovery* is the second *Star Trek* show to share a name with a US Space Shuttle.



Let's hope that this concept art becomes wonderfully real.



Well, *The Woods* wasn't much of a title anyway.

MARVEL

➤ Marvel don't come to San Diego every year, but when they do they make sure it's totally worth their (and our) while – and they weren't just here to show off their new logo.

Alongside the inevitable star appearances/new trailer for *Doctor Strange* (due in cinemas in October), we got some *big* casting news. Okay, the fact that Brie Larson is playing Carol Danvers, aka Captain Marvel, didn't take anybody who's been near a web browser in the last two months by surprise, but it's kinda nice to have it actually confirmed by studio boss Kevin Feige.

Meanwhile, in Wakanda, *Black Panther* (due to start shooting in January) also has some big additions to its cast. Lupita Nyong'o will play Nakia, a member of Prince T'Challa's team of female

bodyguards. *The Walking Dead*'s Danai Gurira will stand alongside her as Okoye, while bad guy duties as Erik Killmonger go to director Ryan Coogler's *Creed* star Michael B Jordan.

Over on *Spider-Man: Homecoming* it was confirmed that the Vulture is the villain (though we're still waiting to hear if the rumours that Michael Keaton is donning the wings are true), while *Thor: Ragnarok* – which had just started production in Australia – sent over an amusing film from director Taika Waititi (*What We Do In The Shadows*) about what Thor had been up to during *Captain America: Civil War*. Marvel also revealed some of Hulk's Planet Hulk-style battle armour.

Last and not least, the Guardians of the Galaxy were in town – with Michael Rooker's Yondu in full costume – to show off some footage from next year's *Vol 2*, and announce that Sylvester Stallone will appear in the sequel. "It's a very, very key, important role," said director James Gunn. "It's not a huge role. He's a great and key supporting actor." With Kurt Russell already on board as Star-Lord's dad, it opens up the intriguing prospect of a *Tango & Cash* reunion. And we've all been waiting for that, right?

Concept art for the pretty neat world of Ragnarok.



Lupita Nyong'o brings a bit of Oscar class.



Kevin Feige with the new Captain Marvel.



"I'm feeling blue."

KONG: SKULL ISLAND

• We didn't get a proper full-length view of the eponymous gorilla – all we can tell is he's *really* big – but *Skull Island*'s Hall H panel did reveal a bit more about next year's reboot of the king of the big-screen monsters. The trailer shows a real *Apocalypse Now* vibe, all helicopters and jungles, and shows off the movie's '70s setting: "It was the last time where myth could still exist," said director Jordan Vogt-Roberts.

As for working with an oversized ape, co-star John Goodman would say only this: "You always had to call him Kong or Mr Kong. You couldn't call him by his name, which is Leo. But when the chips are down he's a hell of a performer. He's got the goods. He won't do press, though. He won't ever do press."

After seeing a skull that size, we'd recommend getting on the next boat.



Stevens and Plaza:
this year's mutants.



Dan Stevens isn't
in *Downton Abbey*
any more.

LEGION

• If prizes were handed out for the weirdest take on a superhero franchise at Comic-Con, they'd almost definitely go to *Legion*. Based around Charles Xavier's eponymous mutant son, it's been adapted for TV by Noah Hawley (the brains behind the *Fargo* TV series), and the trailer is unlike anything previously spawned from a Marvel franchise – no wonder this is reportedly totally separate from the X-Men movie universe. Starring *Downton Abbey*'s Dan Stevens and *Parks And Recreation*'s Aubrey Plaza, it's a jittery, surreal trip into the psyche of a powerful mutant with multiple personalities. We can't wait to see how it turns out when it comes to Fox in the new year.



Nick Setchfield's

DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future



THE UNDISCOVERED DADDY!

STAR TREK 4

Star Trek Beyond has barely warped into cinemas and already we know where the fourth film is heading. It's set to re-enlist **Chris Hemsworth** as George Kirk, father of James T, whose heroic self-sacrifice in the opening moments of 2009's *Star Trek* not only made you cry but took your hot tears and made a nice big cup

of sniffle tea. The screenplay's by **JD Payne** and **Patrick McKay**, the original writers of *Star Trek 3* before the creative warp core breach that ousted director Bob Orci. Given the next movie will clearly meddle with the timestreams, what chance we'll finally see **William Shatner** interact with the new cast? "I've talked to [Shatner] about it," says producer **JJ Abrams**. "If Kirk had

lived [in *Star Trek Generations*] there'd be an answer. But there something about his having died that makes it impossible." Come now, JJ. We don't believe in the no-Will scenario...

DREAM WEAVER!

ALIEN 5

Lord Ridley of Scott has just wrapped the prequelicious *Alien*:

Covenant in Australia but **Neill Blomkamp**'s canon-fixing pitch for an *Alien* sequel just won't go away. First teased in early 2015, the dream project just won the backing of a key figure in the *Alien* franchise: **James Cameron**, writer and director of 1986's *Aliens*. "I think it works like gangbusters," he says of Blomkamp's take, which would resurrect **Sigourney Weaver**'s Ripley by the cunning

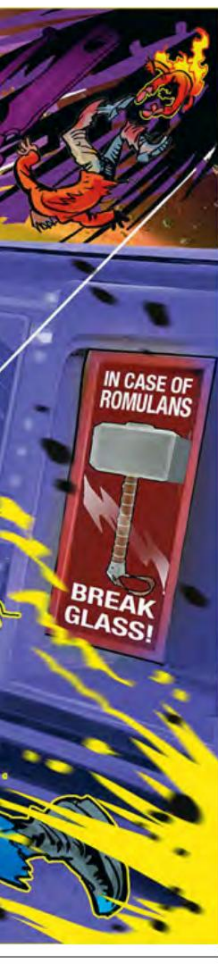


Illustration by Paul Cemmick

creative ploy of jamming its fingers in its ears and screaming “I can’t see you, *Alien 3* and *4*!” Cameron tells *io9*: “He shared it with me and I think it’s a very strong script and he could go make it tomorrow. I don’t know anything about the production, and I don’t know what Ridley’s doing, but hopefully there’ll be room for both of them. Like parallel universes.” Weaver’s also hopeful she’ll kick Xenomorph ass again: “He has work to do and I have work to do. I’m hoping when we finish those jobs we will circle back and start to do it.”

FRESH FROM THE LAB!

FRANKENSTEIN

❖ Not every man is able to pull off the neck bolt. But if anyone can make it work as a style statement, it’s **Javier Bardem**. The *Skyfall* star is said to be up for some lightning-fuelled reanimation as Frankenstein’s monster, part of Universal’s ever-expanding monsterverse initiative (other projects on the slate include Tom Cruise’s *The Mummy* and, it’s rumoured, *The Invisible Man* with Johnny Depp and Dwayne Johnson in *The Wolf Man*). Spin-off flick *The Bride Of Frankenstein* is already in development and the studio’s also hatching a fresh take on Van Helsing, the creature-slaying badass played by Hugh Jackman in 2004. This time they’ll steal their cue from another recently reactivated action hero. Screenwriter **Eric Heisserer** tells *Hitfix*: “Early on, our inspiration for his behaviour and mannerisms was all in *Mad Max*.” Fingers crossed he battles werewolves so we can deploy a *Van Helsing: Furry Road* pun. Oh, we just did. Feel our shame.

MOVES LIKE JAEGER!

PACIFIC RIM: MAELSTROM

❖ We know that **John Boyega** is set to topline the recently greenlit sequel to **Guillermo del Toro**’s monster/mecha brawl-fest from 2013. Now comes word that **Charlie Hunnam**, one of the stars of the original movie, won’t be back. He had a key role in an early



→ **Alicia Vikander**’s *Tomb Raider* opening 16 March 2018...



Kiersey Clemons is Iris West in the *Flash* movie... **Akiva Goldsman** writing Isaac Asimov adap *The Caves Of Steel* for Twentieth Century Fox... **Oprah Winfrey** joining Disney’s *A Wrinkle In Time*... **Max Landis** writing a *Pépé Le Pew* film... *The Walking Dead*’s **Lennie James** joining *Blade Runner 2*... **Will Beall** writing *Aquaman*... **Willem Dafoe** and **Stellan Skarsgård** joining **Terry Gilliam**’s *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*... **Waypoint** Entertainment adapting comic series *Plutona*... **Steve Pink** bringing Sega game *Rent A Hero* to the screen... **Kiefer Sutherland** returning for Sony’s *Flatliners* remake... **Vinnie Jones** joining *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*... **Drive**’s **Cliff Martinez** scoring *Wolverine 3*... **John Malkovich** joining comic con comedy *Supercon*... **Karla Souza** onboard *Jacob’s Ladder* remake... **Amblin** Entertainment optioning alien invasion tale *The Fall*... Twentieth Century Fox adapting **David Petersen**’s graphic novel *Mouse Guard*... **Legendary** developing *Detective Pikachu* movie...

“The premise is filled with ideas that are interesting to revisit”

draft of the screenplay but regrets that other filming commitments have left him unable to save the world again. “I’m very excited about it,” he says. “I’m glad they’re making it.” Another reported absentee is Rinko Kikuchi, who played rookie Jaeger pilot Mako Mori. Del Toro’s only producing this one – it’s set to be directed by **Steven S DeKnight**, who helped bring *Daredevil* to the small screen – but he promises “a lot of the cast from the first movie is coming back”. The script’s by *Jurassic World*’s **Derek Connolly** and the return bout between humanity and monsterdom begins 23 February 2018.

CYBERPUNK ROCKS!

SNOW CRASH

❖ It’s five – five! – years since **Joe Cornish** brought us inner city alien invasion tale *Attack The Block*. Now he’s prepping an overdue return to the big screen, adapting **Neal Stephenson**’s cyberpunk classic *Snow Crash*. Originally published in 1992, it’s set in an independent Los Angeles, ruled by entrepreneurs and connected by a post-internet realm. “I hope we get started on that next year,” producer **Frank Marshall** shares with *Collider*. “It’s a complicated story. It takes place in the near future and it has a lot of virtual reality in it. [There’s] a character that goes back and forth between what’s called the metaverse... the sequences are fantastic and it really gives Joe the opportunity to show that great imagination that he has and create fantastic scenes.” Optioned on publication, the book has smouldered in the digital pathways of Development Hell ever since.

IT’S A BIRD!

SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

❖ It’s official: **Tom Holland**’s teen Spider-Man will tangle with vintage comic book villain the Vulture. The creation of Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, the scrote-faced winged menace debuted in issue two of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, way back in 1963. “It just felt like the right thing to do, to go back to the roots in that way,” director **Jon Watts** tells *ComicBook.com*. “We talked about a lot of different things but the Vulture always rose to the top. And just the opportunity to have Spider-Man versus a guy that can fly really lends itself to some pretty cool visuals.” A role rumoured to be earmarked for the mighty **Michael Keaton**, the swooping reprobate will rock a taloned, hi-tech suit that, Tom Holland says, “allows us to incorporate a much more physical presence from the Vulture... he’s a really formidable villain”. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*’s **Tony Revolori** just joined the project as Peter Parker’s jock nemesis Flash Thompson.

ROMANTIC INTENTIONS!

STARMAN

❖ There’s a *Starman* remake, waiting in the sky... Yes, *Night At The Museum* helmer **Shawn Levy** is set to update John Carpenter’s ’84 classic, the cosmically-tinged romance that bagged an Oscar nomination for Jeff Bridges as an alien who crashlands on Earth – and into the heart of the widowed Karen Allen. “The premise is filled with ideas that are interesting to revisit in a different way in 2016,” says Levy, who recently helmed episodes of ’80s-phile’s delight *Stranger Things*. “I am going to try to be faithful to the romantic spine to the story but also the fish-out-of-water humour, which is genuinely charming and winning in a way that Carpenter and Bridges filmed it.” Levy says he’s considering previous collaborators for the title role, meaning everyone from Hugh Jackman to Ben Stiller could be in the frame for some cross-species swooning. *Grace Of Monaco*’s **Arash Amel** provides the screenplay. ●

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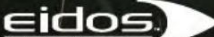
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First Contact



THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

NICK SETCHFIELD,
FEATURES EDITOR



We're living in an age of reboots – but has there ever been a Hollywood redo more divisive than Paul Feig's female-fronted take on *Ghostbusters*? It's the film that set fire to the internet this summer and, naturally, we wanted to know what you made of it, once you finally had a chance to catch it at the cinema... Plus, you told us your *Star Wars* dreams. We're always keen to hear your views, whatever the subject – get in touch via the ways opposite. Who you gonna call?



SFX Hot Topic Your views on the month's big issue

#THE NEW GHOSTBUSTERS

➔ **Steve Edwards, email** It was like watching a love letter to *Ghostbusters* fans. There were enough (respectful) nods to the original to keep fans happy, while still having enough new material, ideas and jokes to enable it to stand on its own feet. A nice mix of comic styles, both mirroring the style of the original's comedy while introducing some modern, contemporary comedic elements as well.

➔ **Matt Hemsworth, Facebook** Not bad, just different. A few too many nods to the classics but it took them as a starting point and ran in new directions. I liked the new characters and could happily watch more of them.

➔ **Andrew Gaskell, Facebook** If they had cast the women as the daughters of the original *Ghostbusters* then I would have gone to see it at the cinema.

➔ **Darren Carnall, Facebook** If anything it had more laughs than the original (which I still love), and the visual effects were not only spectacular and flawless, they were beautiful too. The use of colour and 3D on the ghosts was amazing – the

most inventive and effective 3D I've ever seen in a film.

SFX Even better than the decapitated fish head floating out of the screen in *Jaws 3-D*, you say?

➔ **David Chapman, Facebook** The people who have been abusing the cast in general and Leslie Jones in particular should be ashamed of themselves, but that doesn't alter the fact that this is a dismal and awful retread of a classic comedy.

➔ **Gavin Dickinson, Facebook** I was one of those hating on this movie having grown up with the original but after watching I found it to be really funny. A good comedy – but mediocre for a *Ghostbusters* reboot.

➔ **John Edwards, Facebook** The cameos were a mixed bunch. Murray and Aykroyd were largely pointless. I hope Hudson and Weaver get larger roles in a sequel.

➔ **Paul Levy, email** Really glad we got to hear the Ray Parker Jr theme! It's the funkier song in the whole world! Not too fussed about the other versions...

➔ **Eduard Korhonen, Facebook** I got free tickets – I certainly had no intention of paying. Somehow it managed to be even worse than I expected, and my expectations were below rock bottom.

➔ **Tristan Heaven, Facebook** I thought it was poor.

Four women who took on huge enemies...





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“I was one of those hating on the movie but I found it really funny”

The issue was not the cast – they were alright, nothing to shout about – but the script was so poor. Sack the director and the scriptwriters and hopefully the second film will be a lot better.

🔗 **Bernard Kwan, Facebook** Entertaining, but doesn't reach the heights it could have achieved. I thought it banked too much on nostalgia (not that it was a totally bad thing...).

🔗 **David Daniels** Reboot travesty.

🔗 **Rob Perry, Facebook** No, it's not the original, but neither is it trying to be. None of the new characters are analogous to the originals and by simply taking the concept and basic shape of the original movie, but telling a different story, it didn't feel like a pointless and inferior rehash. The cameos were mostly fine but there were perhaps a few too many “kisses to the past”. Vastly superior to the slapdash, dumbed down retread that was *Ghostbusters 2*.

SFX Is that the sound of a troop of *Ghostbusters 2* fans strapping on their proton packs in anger? Look, let's not start another fight...

Look out for the next SFX Hot Topic at bit.ly/SFXHotTopic



Check out our review on page 95!



Skegness: nice at this time of year.

#THE FUTURE OF STAR WARS

🔗 **Keith Tudor, Romsey** The *Star Wars* franchise should remain fun and energetic. There should be quality over quantity. Traditional filmmaking methods should continue to be employed. Filming in the UK should continue (the Imperial Officers mostly sounded British). Cameos from the original cast would be good (such as David Prowse, Jeremy Bulloch etc). No CGI characters. Plenty of space dogfights, ideally with the models in the style of John Dykstra. Music from John Williams. Poster art from Drew Struzan. Lightsaber duels with mixed martial arts and a swashbuckler feel. Okay, so I'm a traditionalist when it comes to *Star Wars* after the prequel trilogy went too CGI heavy...

🔗 **Sam Hopkins, Leamington Spa** Way too many callbacks with the new *Star Wars* movies, especially now it's confirmed Vader's going to be in *Rogue One*. The thing people loved about the original *Star Wars* is that everything was mindblowingly new. Let's get back to that spirit, please!

🔗 **Carl Roberts, Hinckley** After seeing the trailers and Celebration reel, is it just me or does *Rogue One* look like it could be even better than *The Force Awakens*?

SFX Could be, Carl. At least we won't have to endure yet another *Death Star*. Oh, hold on...

🔗 **Stephen Wynde, Tonbridge** More plot lines involving trade federation negotiations please! Let's get back to the good stuff! **SFX** Beware the power of the *Iron Side*, Stephen.

#PERRY GOOD

🔗 **Paul Vought, email** That was an excellent article on the *Perry Rhodan* novels [Time Machine, *SFX* 275]. I remember the books being read by my father and his brothers back in the '70s. You inspired me to seek out the Futura and Ace editions of the Third Power series secondhand and I'm enjoying the reads. Also, concerning the actor who played the narrator on the opening credits of *Sapphire & Steel* [Total Recall, *SFX* 276], I always thought it was Bernard Holley and not David Suchet. Bernard played the main Axon Man in the *Doctor Who* adventure “The Claws Of Axos”. Listen to the credits of *Sapphire & Steel* and then watch a bit of “The Claws Of Axos”. Of course, I could be wrong...

SFX Any more thoughts on the identity of the oh so enigmatic voiceover man from *Sapphire & Steel*? Who was he? Why has he →

First Contact Oct 2016

Checking out *Stranger Things*. Rubik's Cube presumably on floor.



never come forward? Will he always be a fascinating blank in TV history? Wait, what if he looks like that dude with no face from the story with the photographs...

#ID PLEASE

☛ **Charlie Hall, Basingstoke** So *Suicide Squad* has got a 15 rating over here. Got to say I'm disappointed – to me this is just the latest sign that superhero films aren't being made for the audience they should be, ie the kids. Zack Snyder's got to take a lot of the blame for this, but it's the way it's been going since Tim Burton's *Batman* back in '89. *Deadpool* was another one not for under-15s. When I was a kid we had tons of superhero films we could see – admittedly sometimes not great ones! – but these days I feel sorry for the young 'uns who can't see half of them.

SFX I agree with you, Charlie. The greatest superhero movies work for everyone, irrespective of age. I get as much out of *Superman The Movie* now as I did when I was 11. If I'd seen *Batman V Superman at that age* I'd probably be in *Arkham* by now.

#COMIC CON?

☛ **Pete Surtis, Grimsby** Loved your article on the *Scream!* comic in

SFX 277. It brought back lots of memories. Like how even though it said "Every Monday" on the cover it never came out on a Monday! I think I used to get mine on a Thursday. Just looking at that cover I can feel the paper it used to be on, and even smell it too! Aah, comics smell, intermingled with the sweets in the newsagents... I remember the weird, hollow, disappointed feeling I got when I found out *Scream!* was no longer. "Why?!" I asked myself – it was great! Anyway, cheers for covering it. Now let's have an article on horror crisps of the '70s.

SFX 2000 AD was the same. "In orbit every Monday" declared the cover – but it was always a Saturday thing, wasn't it? Readers, can you explain this puzzling space-time anomaly?

#NOT QUITE ALIVE

☛ **Hywel, email** I really wanted to love *The Living And The Dead*. It's



“Am I the only one not raving about *Stranger Things*?”

great that the BBC are giving us a supernatural show in primetime, and, fair play, it looks gorgeous: all those ravishing shots of the English countryside look amazing on a hi-def telly. But it's just so dull, and not nearly as scary as it should be. I wanted something that felt like those wonderfully creepy old Christmas Ghost Stories but this was more like *Poldark* with the occasional shudder thrown in!

SFX There's one new series you all seem to love, though. Or is there...?

#BACK TO THE '80S

☛ **Craig Dalglish, email** I'm loving *Stranger Things*. I haven't binged on a TV show like this since the early years of *Supernatural*! What a fantastic nostalgic trip through '80s Spielbergian cinema. The homages to some of my fave '80s films shine brightly. Well done,

Netflix! Let's not ruin it with a sub-standard second season though, eh?

☛ **Ben Jones, email** Am I the only one on the planet not raving about *Stranger Things*? It's decent enough but not that brilliant, surely? I think people are being blinded by all the blatant '80s homages: Spielberg woods! A poster for *The Thing!* *Dungeons & Dragons!* Nothing wrong with nostalgia, of course, but the show seems to be getting praised to the skies just for pushing all the right buttons with Generation X. Is this what our culture's come to? Good drama's just a bunch of cool T-shirt choices now, is it?

SFX I was preparing a really deep and thoughtful reply for you, Ben, and then "Africa" by Toto came on and all my critical faculties went out the window.

#NOT CONVERTED

☛ **Claire Holmes, email** Am I the only one who's finding it really hard to get into *Preacher*? Some episodes have been brilliant, but they're interrupted by others in which buggar all seems to happen and the main focus seems to be

"Look at our lovely cinematography!" rather than "Hey, check out the story!" I know this happens on lots of shows – *Daredevil* and *Jessica Jones* could be really slow, too – but I can't seem to forgive *Preacher* for doing the same thing. The cast are great, though, and when stuff does happen, it's brilliant. It's just a bit... "Get a move on!"

SFX Two "Am I the only one" intros in a row, folks!

#WE ALSO HEARD FROM

☛ **Declan Byrne, email** Why, oh why, hasn't *The Expanse* been shown in the UK? It's superb and, for all their





Space gymnastics fun in *The Expanse*.

slightly cheap charm, *Killjoys* and *Dark Matter* are not in the same league. Thankfully the US Blu-ray is region free but the show's absence from a UK channel is such a shame.

📺 **Fiona Stone, email** Enjoyed your feature on *Suicide Squad* in *SFX* but it took me a whole week to realise why you'd called the interview with Captain Boomerang "The Comeback King". **SFX Slow-release puns. Our favourite.**

📺 **Becky Hicks, email** Great interview with Nicolas Winding Refn in the latest issue [*SFX* 277]. Never thought I'd see someone giving a shout-out to *Blake's 7* and *Fleshpot On 42nd Street* in the same breath! Bet he'd be a great person to have a movie marathon with...

SFX We'll supply the pizza. You supply the sofa. Refn brings the fashion model cannibals.

📺 **Stephen McAfee, email** So I'm finally catching up with *Agents Of SHIELD* season three, and it is bloody brilliant! No, let me rephrase that: it's unmissable. I'm a 30-year-old man, I won't lie, but "spy's goodbye", it broke me.

📺 **Wayne Ulliyatt, Sheffield** I've just bought a copy of *The League Of Regrettable Superheroes*, recommended by Nick Setchfield in the pages of your illustrious magazine. I'm writing to let Nick and other fans know that the author has a sequel planned for publication in March 2017, imaginatively titled *The League Of Regrettable Supervillains*.

SFX Thanks for letting us know, Wayne, and glad my tip was useful. Personally I'm holding out for Volume 3: The League Of Regrettable Superpets.



Your sci-fi memorabilia valued by the experts from auctioneers Vectis

➔ Lance Alexander says: "I own this Kenner 18" Alien from 1979, complete and boxed with working jaw. Bought it years ago. Love to know value and rarity."



KATHY TAYLOR OF VECTIS SAYS:

This Kenner Alien 1979 18" figure is the ultimate goal for *Alien* collectors. Back in the day when the toy was available it wasn't a good seller. The film was not suitable viewing for children; parents were not happy to allow their children to play with this creature and consequently there weren't many produced and sold. It's also fragile in construction, with many parts becoming damaged, especially the back spikes, teeth and tail. The arms can become detached and lost - as can the translucent head dome.

The market for adult collectables was not as it is nowadays - toys were generally meant to be played with by children, not cherished and kept within their packaging by adults.

Although this *Alien* action figure represents a faithful rendition of H R Giger's creation Kenner did not pursue further marketing.

If you've got a piece of memorabilia you'd like us to feature, send us a photo with a few words about what it means to you, to sfx@future.net, using the subject line Cash In The AT-AT.

SFX

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"I feel like Jesus!"

WOLVERINE 3

Hugh Jackman is about to make his last stand as Logan. How should he go out? *Illustration by Paul Garner*



YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

HEY, FOX – LISTEN TO OUR READERS' DEMANDS OR THEY'LL POP THEIR CLAWS WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE, BUB!

OLD MAN LOGAN

1 Jackman's already teased that his final movie may take inspiration from Mark Millar and Steve McNiven's acclaimed comic book series, 2008-2009's *Old Man Logan* – and you definitely want to see a post-apocalyptic Wolvie up there on the big screen. **Oliver Hayman** says: "A futuristic setting would give us something really fresh – the worldbuilding possibilities alone would be brilliant. Come on, it's the story the fans are clamouring for!"

THE BIG GOODBYE

2 Story choices aside, you just want to see a movie that's a fitting farewell to Hugh Jackman after 17 years of faithful service in the line of mutant duty (amazingly this will be the ninth time he's played the role). "Make sure he goes out on a high," says **Tasha P.** "He deserves the best script and the best direction for this one. He's always been the greatest thing about the X-Men movies. Give Wolverine the send-off he deserves."

GET READY TO RUMBLE

3 Time to see Wolverine bring the berserk, you reckon. "A decent scrap!" says **Neil Tex Hickman.** "With Sabretooth! Liev Schreiber was great in the role – one good thing about *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*."

MUTANT X-23

4 You also want to see Logan meet his female counterpart from the comic books, created as part of the Weapon X programme. "Having just watched *X-Men Apocalypse*'s post credits scene I think they are hinting at X-23," says **Chris Coghlan.** "It might be an interesting subplot."

ENTER ARCADE!

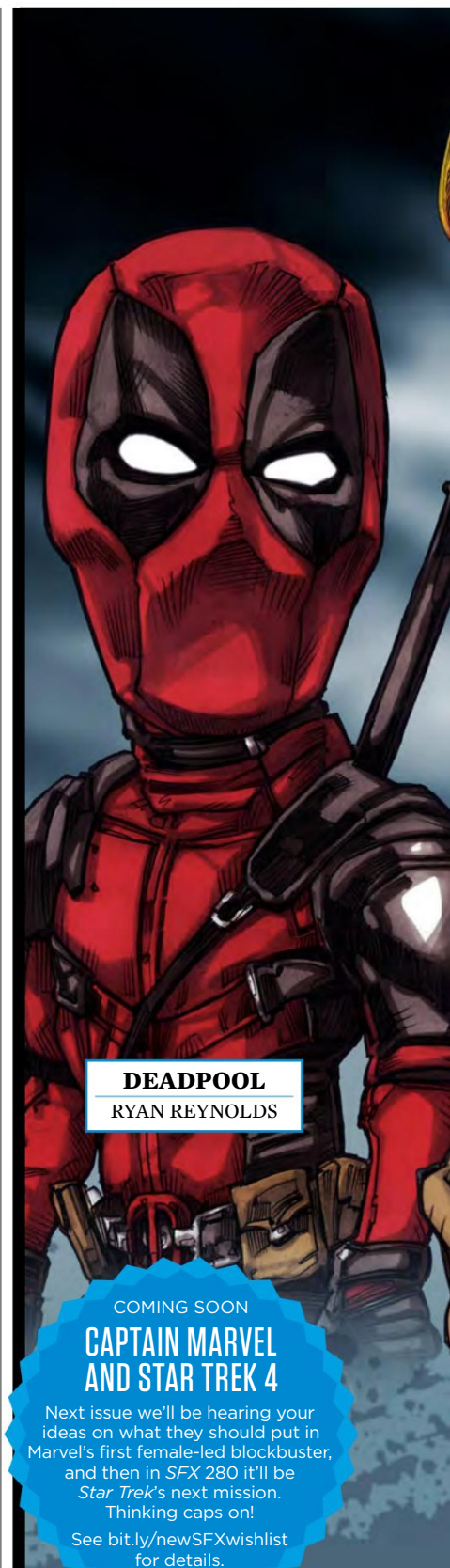
5 We know the mighty Richard E Grant's in the cast – and **Pete Surtis** reckons he'd be perfect as classic X-villain Arcade, master of lethal funfairs. "He's got the right amount of flamboyance and he's great at playing psychos," says Pete. "Just imagine the action scenes you could have in Murderworld!"

And that's not all they want... ↴

→ **Chris Worboys** Deadpool cameo! More lesser known X-Men/mutants like Domino, along with the Colossus from *Deadpool* – he was great. And the yellow suit with the mask, just once in a film, please. That will settle my fanboy urges!
→ **Alex Holmes** Deadpool vs Wolverine (as in the latest movie and not the f**k-up with the mouth sewn shut from *X-Men: Origins: Wolverine*)!
→ **Jim Covert-Ily** Logan v Hulk. Their beef was legendary in the comics. A perfect clash of egos.
→ **Sarah Simons** Make it better than *The Wolverine*! Lordy, that was one tedious, pretentious and miserable movie.
→ **Craig Hedges** Sofia Boutella

from *Kingsman* would be perfect to play X-23. Face it, she's got form when it comes to fighting with blades on her feet!
→ **Chris Stockton** I really enjoyed seeing Wolvie in action in *World War II* in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. Just imagine an *Inglourious Basterds* style war epic with Logan on a mission into occupied territory... hell, have him go up against Christoph Waltz as a milk-drinking Nazi!
→ **Jason Trevers** No way should they put him in the costume from the comics. That would just look daft on the screen. Accept that this is a different Wolverine from the comic books – he's a lot taller, for one thing!

→ **Terry Hughes** More Sentinels! You can never go wrong with more Sentinels!
→ **Anne Harvey** I'm just glad that Patrick Stewart is going to be in it. Him and Hugh Jackman are always great together. Hope they get to share lots of scenes together.
→ **Len** It's got to be *Old Man Logan*. They need to properly *Mad Max* it up but knowing Hollywood it'll bear no resemblance to the comic.
→ **Ben Jones** What's the point of doing *Old Man Logan*? They haven't got the rights to all the other Marvel characters! Bit pointless without them.
→ **Fiona Stone** Kill him off! You can't replace Hugh Jackman, so why not?



DEADPOOL

RYAN REYNOLDS

COMING SOON CAPTAIN MARVEL AND STAR TREK 4

Next issue we'll be hearing your ideas on what they should put in Marvel's first female-led blockbuster, and then in *SFX* 280 it'll be *Star Trek*'s next mission. Thinking caps on!

See bit.ly/newSFXwishlist for details.

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YOUR DREAM CAST



ARCADE

RICHARD E GRANT

X-23

SOFIA BOUTELLA

LOGAN

HUGH JACKMAN

PROFESSOR X

PATRICK STEWART



Penny Dreadful

SFX's high priestess of horror

WITCHING HOUR

So Adam Wingard's *The Woods* is actually a stealth sequel to *The Blair Witch Project*, called ***Blair Witch***. Mind blown. Given the ridiculous publicity machine that exists around movies – marketing campaigns that cost millions, carefully controlled screenings and, very frequently with horror, critics not even being allowed to see the film before it's out, Lionsgate seems to have done something risky but genius. Not only did they not tell anyone it was happening, EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS A TRAILER, but they announced the movie and then immediately screened it to a massive fan audience, who loved it. *Blair Witch* didn't give anyone time to moan about it. We've made *Blair Witch*, boom, here it is. At the time of writing I hadn't yet seen it, but with Wingard and his regular scribe Simon Barrett (*The Guest*, *You're Next*) on board I'm so up for this. I'm throwing in my chips and I'm going to say film of the year right now.

NIGHT FEVER

Talking of horror surprise attacks, the first trailer for M Night Shyamalan's new film ***Split*** arrived this month. It's got a lot going for it – James McAvoy as the lead, Anya Taylor-Joy from *The Witch* starring opposite him, produced by my beloved Jason Blum. And the first 30 seconds or so looked cool – McAvoy as a skinhead weirdo who kidnaps three teenage girls and locks them in a basement. And then he rocks up in a dress doing a “We're ladies!” voice. And then he's a nine-year-old kid. I want to like it but, boy, this looks stupid! McAvoy is apparently a person with 23 distinct personalities residing in the one body. Riiiiight.

NETFLIX AND THRILL

I've been trawling Netflix for horror movies lately, which can be something of a thankless task. I did spot a new addition that I'd highly recommend though – ***The Invitation***, directed by *Jennifer's Body*'s Karyn Kusama. It's a creepy and uncomfortable horror of manners, where a guy and his girlfriend visit the house of his ex-wife and her new fella for a dinner party. It's awkward. And then it's a lot worse than

A new *Blair Witch*?
A new Shyamalan?
Horror has been a
total ninja this month



James McAvoy battles multiple personalities in *Split*.



Blair Witch is back! And it took us completely by surprise!



Guess who's coming to dinner in *The Invitation*.

awful. Check this out and while you're there have a peek at *Ava's Possessions*, a horror-comedy about a girl who has to attend rehab for the recently possessed. Fun!

PENNY FIXES THE FILM INDUSTRY

Every low-budget movie would be better as a genre flick. Here is my irrefutable evidence. I went to a very early sneak peek screening of a movie called ***The Ghoul***, admittedly because I didn't bother to read the blurb and assumed it was a horror. It's not (quite) but it should be. It's written and directed by Gareth Tunley and stars Tom Meeten as a guy who might be an undercover cop investigating a strange murder. Only of course it's a great deal more complicated than that. It's impressive, well shot and Meeten's incredible. But the problem is it's not a genre film, or not properly anyway. In fact it turns into a drama about mental illness. Not metaphorically but very literally, and though we're teased with hints at a demonic psychiatrist using his patients to achieve immortality in some way, it's very clearly the delusions of a troubled mind. There isn't even a ghoul in it. Cut down the middle, up the genre factor, make it a whole lot more ambiguous and suddenly you've got an awesome indie chiller that's still about mental illness just not quite so literally. Critical acclaim, the festival circuit and a Netflix release are all yours. Bish bash bosh and now you're the director of the next Marvel movie. And that's a principle that definitely applies to all low-budget movies ever. ●

Dreadful old movie

Wes Craven masterpiece *The Hills Have Eyes* is getting a limited edition re-release from Arrow. Following an American family terrorised by a group of cannibals, it's extreme and visceral. The new edition is out 26 September with a new restoration, art, postcards and a poster, plus interviews and featurettes. Harrowing but important.



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ALL CHANGE, PLEASE

Author and Cracked.com columnist **Robert Brockway** says there's no need for adaptations to be too faithful



“I THOUGHT,
‘I SHOULD’VE
SAVED THE
MONEY AND
JUST REREAD
THE COMIC”

Hey, have you seen that new *Preacher* television show? I'm a die-hard fan of the comic and wow – this has to be one of the least faithful adaptations ever.

Following that kind of statement, you'd expect the rest of this space to be filled with swear words and crude hexes directed at the showrunner's more sensitive bits. But no: I actually love the show, and not in spite of, but because of its unfaithfulness.

We're not even talking superficial differences here, like changing a costume or a setting: the *Preacher* TV show completely disregards the very heart of the book. The *Preacher* comic was a punk rock epic – not so much a statement as a middle finger – committed almost exclusively to ridiculing everything that Ennis saw wrong with America, and pop culture in general. The TV show has a few snide remarks for America, and maybe a disapproving glare for the zeitgeist, but it's much more philosophical. It's deeply concerned with faith versus free will, and the importance of one to the seeming exclusion of the other.

In short, *Preacher*, the TV show, abandons nearly everything that I loved about *Preacher*, the comic book, and yet I still say it's stronger for it. How can I call myself a fan of the original and still applaud this total overhaul? Easy! I accept that a work and its adaptation are entirely different things. It sounds simple, but it's not something that we, as nerds, often practice. Usually we rant and rave at the slightest deviation from our precious source material – “They changed what about Superman's costume?! I hope they remember to hydrate, because I hear it's warm in hell” – but that doesn't have to be the case.

The most faithful recent adaptation I can recall was Zack Snyder's *Watchmen*. Upon leaving the theatre, all I could think was, “I should've saved the money and just reread the comic.” It was okay, but I had seen it all before. By strictly adhering to what the comic was about – mostly uniquely '80s concerns about mass destruction – the movie made itself immediately irrelevant. The least faithful adaptation I can recall would be the movie *Constantine*. And yes, I am about to say it. God forgive me, but even though they cast Keanu Reeves as a character that's supposed to be an overly-emotional blond Brit – the polar opposite of a Keanu – *Constantine* was still a good flick. *Hellblazer* is hands down my favourite comic. I own every single issue. And yet I can still find space in my heart for the film that had the gall to cast Shia LaBeouf as Chas.

How do I do it?

Try a little game: watch *Constantine*, or the *Preacher* TV show, or any adaptation that gets shade for its departure from the source material, and mentally retit it. Name the characters something else. Keanu is now Jim Intermittentine. Change the details: Cassidy isn't a vampire, but a werewolf or a rogue merman. Does it still entertain? If so, it's a good adaptation. Instead of sending Hollywood executives death threats penned with our own tears of indignant rage, we should be thankful they cut our favourite artists a fat cheque when they probably could've cited “fair use”, tweaked the title to *Padre*, and never paid a dime. The suckers. ●

Robert Brockway's latest book, *The Empty Ones*, the sequel to *The Unnoticeables*, is out on 30 August. Visit his site at www.robertbrockway.net.

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SCHISMATRIX

by Bruce Sterling, 1985

Alastair Reynolds wasn't the only one inspired by a Sterling effort



I'll make a bold claim: any significant work of space opera written in the last 30 years owes a debt to *Schismatrix*. Even if not directly inspired, it will have been shaped by

the motifs of other writers who *did* read it – and whose minds were suitably blown.

I know because I was one of them.

All of which is puzzling because *Schismatrix* isn't precisely space opera, at least not by the usual parameters. It's set entirely in the solar system, and the technologies are extrapolated from our current capabilities. Cloning, genetic engineering, cybernetics, environmental modification, fusion power – nothing *too* outlandish. Where the book scores is in taking each conceit and looking at it with a bracing freshness – and thereby refusing to be influenced by the stale groupthink of previous generations of writers.

This ruthless process operates at every level of the book, from its astute considerations of interplanetary politics to its fastidious attention to spacecraft mechanics, to a fetish-like devotion to interior decor and fashions. My overwhelming impression at the time I encountered this novel was that someone had finally found the colour switch for science fiction. It was like having an electrode jammed into my visual cortex.

The plot, such as it is, is more episodic than epic. A genetically engineered diplomat, Abelard Lindsay, confronts a series of ethical and political challenges across 200 years of increasingly weird future history. At the outset, the solar system is in the middle of a cold war, dominated by two power blocs, the Mechanists and the Shapers. Lindsay moves between



factions, a slippery fish with a gift for improvisation. Later, aliens arrive in the solar system, ratcheting up tensions as the two powers try to curry influence. Along the way, Lindsay's machinations throw him into conflict with a rival character, Constantine, and their feud provides the novel's narrative backbone.

More aliens arrive, further destabilising human affairs. But there are also opportunities, as alien technologies open up new economies and markets. As the decades roll on, the pace of

change only hastens. The final passages see even the jaded Lindsay reeling from the onslaught of progress. The closing chapters of the book offer some of the densest imaginative thinking ever seen in science fiction, and the effect is giddy.

Published in 1985, *Schismatrix* was Sterling's third novel and the last to be set in space. Over the previous half decade he had staked out his territory with a series of brilliant short stories exploring facets of the Mechanist-Shaper universe. If you can, incidentally, get hold of the 1995 expanded edition, *Schismatrix Plus*, which includes these shorter works, as well as a timeline. *Schismatrix* was the capstone to this series and its influence, subtly at first, began to play out in the wave of "new hard SF" and "new space opera" works appearing in the '90s and beyond. While it lacks many of the obvious trappings of space opera, it nonetheless *feels* space operatic: the pace, the spectacle, the sweep of locales, the density of ideas, the imaginative panache. It's dated in some mostly minor aspects – there is no "internet", as such – but there is a great deal of clever thinking about cybernetics and bio-engineering, and much of the speculation remains as provocative and disturbing as when it was written.

Oh, and Sterling was not even 30 when he completed this novel. Read it and weep. ●

Alastair Reynolds' new book, *Reverger*, is published on 15 September.

Like this? Try these!

DIASPORA
by GREG EGAN (1997)

→ Egan's face-melter of a novel builds on a phenomenal short story ("Wang's Carpets") to explore a future human civilisation spreading into the galaxy via digital simulations.



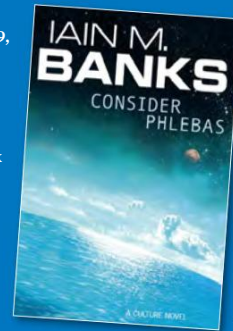
NATURAL HISTORY
by JUSTINA ROBSON (2003)

→ Robson's vastly entertaining book deals with the clash between natural-born and "Forged" bio-cybernetic intelligences with immense wit and gorgeous imaginative visualisation.



NEXT ISSUE ↓

Our next edition of Book Club (in SFX 279, on sale 14 September) has Gareth L Powell writing about Iain M Banks's classic space opera *Consider Phlebas*, his first book to feature the Culture. If you've never read it – or just fancy giving it another go – now's the time to do so before a top writer gives his opinion.



Next Issue

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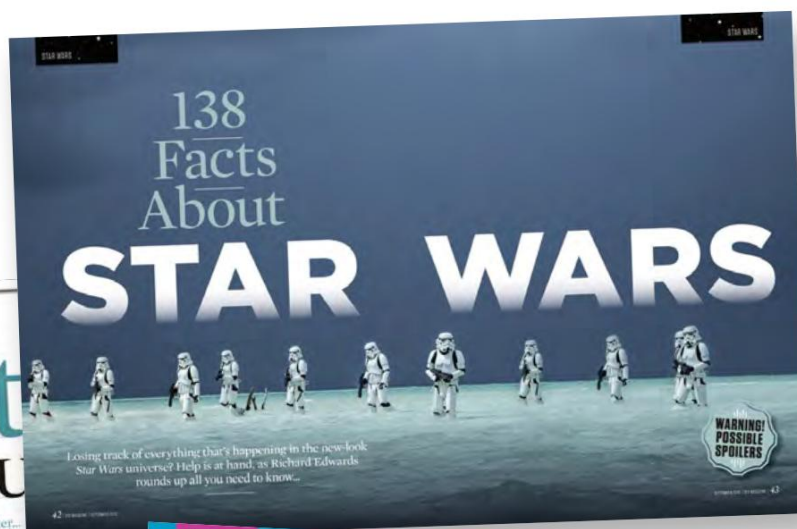
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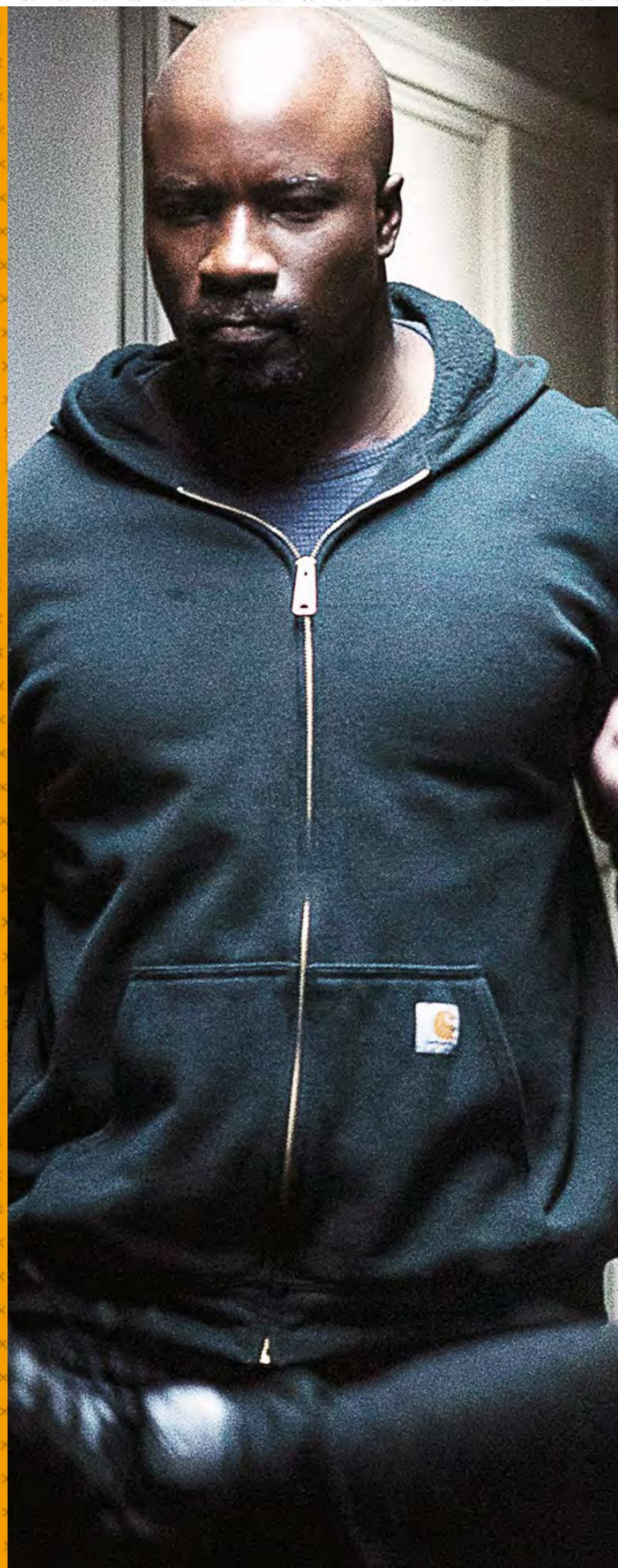


URBAN WARRIOR

xxxxxxxxxx

“It’s hip-hop television!”
Nick Setchfield is in
New York to meet
LUKE CAGE,
the latest Marvel icon
to hit the screen

xxxxxxxxxx



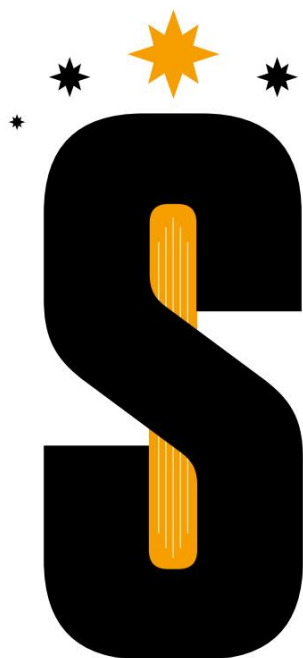
 **NEW SHOW!**

SEASON 1

► US BROADCAST Netflix from 30 September

► UK BROADCAST Netflix from 30 September





Superheroes aren't renowned for keeping it real.

At their shiniest and most godlike – Superman, Iron Man, Thor – they soar over our cities, characters built for the sky, not the sidewalk. Even urban types like Batman or Spider-Man swoop between the steel towers of Gotham or Manhattan, high above the scuzz and squalor, above the people they've pledged to protect. Only the ground-level protagonists of Marvel's ever-expanding Netflix empire – Daredevil, Jessica Jones, the Punisher – look as if they might have blisters on their heels, let alone zipcodes to their names.

"People sometimes get lost in the spandex of it all," says Cheo Hodari Coker, executive producer and showrunner of Netflix's latest comic book adap. "We focus on the drama and the human interaction in addition to the powers. It's the opportunity to tell deeper stories."

NEW YORK MINUTES

If you want true street credibility, you need to go looking for Luke Cage. *SFX* has come to New York to find him. We're in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a neighbourhood once known as Brooklyn's Little Harlem (tonight it's doubling for its more famous counterpart across the East River). Here the brownstone buildings hug the horizon, a skyline lower but no less iconic than Manhattan's skyscrapers. The dazzle of a lighting rig illuminates the huddle of townhouses and fire escapes, a camera crane caught in its sun-bright spotlight. On set, the lights of a parked police car flash in an agitated sequence of red and blue. The sirens of the true-life NYPD howl in the distance.

This neighbourhood has seen race riots and gang wars. It also gifted the world the Notorious B.I.G., a fact far from lost on Coker, a former *Rolling Stone* and *Vibe* journalist who

Luke Cage, Builder For Hire might come in handy here.



“People sometimes get lost in the spandex of it all. We focus on the human interaction”

befriended the late rap star and co-wrote the 2009 biopic *Notorious*. "Today is always a poignant day for me," he tells *SFX*, in-between set-ups, "because this was the day 19 years ago that he was shot."

Coker declares himself "a hip-hop head" as much as a "comic book head". *Luke Cage* will unite his two loves, welding hip-hop's energy and attitudinal bite to the imaginative possibilities of the Marvel universe. Biggie, he says, is here in spirit.

"The new hip-hop, ultimately, is translating hip-hop attitude into new mediums. I can't rap – I freestyle like everybody else, and I'm terrible – but I love the music. How do you translate the culture and the feeling of it into a

new medium? That's what Marvel and Netflix represents – it's the opportunity to make hip-hop television.

"Now hip-hop television doesn't mean people bouncing their shoulders and nodding their heads," Coker clarifies. "It's the opportunity to tell stories that have an edge and a hard perspective but at the same time are deep. If I was going to compare *Luke Cage* to an album, I'd compare it to Raekwon's *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*, I'd compare it to A Tribe Called Quest's *Midnight Marauders*. We're coming with something that is completely new. We have a lot of old elements but we're doing them in a new way that's funky and fresh."

And it's as much a small-screen graphic



No, that's *not* a giant chocolate digestive.



It's nice that men can hug one another.

novel as a visual hip-hop album, says Coker, insisting that the show is true to its primary-coloured roots. "It's classic Luke Cage, and it's not different from the Luke Cage in the comics. But we're able to go places that you couldn't necessarily go [in the comics]... Luke Cage belongs to Marvel. But they're letting me drive the car around and they let me take it to the garage and add a couple of things to it. It's not about reinventing the car. It's about making it roll faster."

We met Cage in the form of Mike Colter in the first season of *Jessica Jones*. His solo show relocates him from Hell's Kitchen to Harlem. He's a fugitive now, keeping his profile low, working shifts in a neighbourhood barber's.

The run of 13 episodes teases out his untold origin, revealing the truth of the unlawful prison experiment that gave him phenomenal strength and bulletproof flesh. Unlike the invincible mercenary of the comic books, this Cage is yet to monetise his powers.

"When you think about Luke, when you think about a hero for hire, that's what makes Luke different than almost any other superhero," Coker tells *SFX*. "When you see what they go through you're like, man, they ought to get paid for that shit! In this case it's not about Luke being a hero for hire. Season one is about Luke embracing what it is to be a hero.

"What makes Luke special is that he's one of the rare Marvel characters that doesn't have a →

POWER★MAN

MIKE COLTER, UNCAGED



Were you familiar with the comic book?

★ Not really. I have done some reading since getting the job because it's important to understand the history and the mythology of it. I'm catching up. I really enjoyed the *Alias* comics because the Luke Cage character there is more up to date. I read some of the original comics – they're fun to read but it doesn't give me much because our character is so modern and up to date. Just the time, the era – the language was different in the '70s, the people were different, everything was different. So the problems were different, because society was so different. The things that a superhero like me would deal with back then are not the same things that I would deal with now.

You're playing a guy who's bulletproof and unbreakable. Does that affect the physicality of your performance, the way you carry yourself?

★ Yeah, it does. Ultimately when you're aware that certain things don't hurt you you're not as timid as other people would be. [But] you're not trying to engage, you don't want to have conflict. Those things are actually a burden to you. If you hit someone you could hurt them, so you really have to think about things. You avoid problems a lot.

Is there anything in Luke's character you can relate to?

★ I think the reluctance to be exposed in a public way. As an actor you enjoy doing what you do, but then the publicity that you have attached with this occupation exposes to you being objectified and watched. Luke Cage has that issue. I can relate to that need to have some privacy and not need to always be in the public eye.

Do you get to say "Sweet Christmas!" again?

★ Oh, we'll have enough! Appropriately placed throughout! **Nick Setchfield**

secret identity. He doesn't wear a mask. He doesn't live in Stark Tower or the Baxter Building. You know how to find him. In our world, if you want to find Luke Cage you go to Pop's Barbershop. He's reluctant to be a hero but because he knows the responsibility of what he's taking on, he takes it seriously."

As Power Man, Luke Cage was one of the first wave of African-American comic book heroes, born of the early '70s Blaxploitation boom that gave us such ghetto-noir crime movies as *Shaft*, *Superfly* and *Cleopatra Jones*. In the tinderbox America of 2016, where the hashtag #blacklivesmatter reflects troubling racial faultlines, Cage is a character with a newfound relevance.

"My main responsibility is to tell a story," says Coker. "The fact that I get to tell a good story that's culturally relevant is icing on the cake. I think it's important that black artists and black writers have the ability to do that."

POLITICS

The show doesn't run from its inevitable political context. Pointedly, the screen Cage exchanges the disco-friendly fashion of those '70s comics for a hoodie – a wardrobe choice weighted with meaning now.

"We'll definitely give a shout-out to our origins but wearing bright yellow and a tiara is not necessarily practical in this world," says Coker [in fact the show shot under the codename *Tiara*, a nod to Cage's famous metal headband – SFX spots this logo on a wall, rendered in a perfect, drop-shadowed '70s font]. "Luke was always functional. Even when he wore that in the comic book it was, 'Okay, I've come to Times Square in the '70s. I need to have a certain look.'"

"At the same time there is a commentary because you have people, particularly African-American males, who have been victimised for nothing more than wearing a hoodie. People are saying, 'Oh, if you're wearing the hoodie that's a thug look' – because thug has unfortunately replaced the N-word. Something that we were very conscious of, as a writing staff and as a show,

IN THE HOOD

Costume designer
Stephanie Maslansky
talks urban outfitting

"Luke's iconic look has basically become one of jeans, a t-shirt and a hoodie. It ties in so much with what's happening topically in America right now. Because he gets shot at a lot, he winds up wearing a hoodie with a lot of holes in it. Nothing happens to him, he's unbreakable – his skin doesn't get damaged but his clothes do, and it's become an interesting thing that's been woven through the show. Rather than putting on something made out of stretchy fabric or is bulletproof and knife-proof, similar to the kind of superheroes you see in the movies, and to some degree Daredevil, his costume offers him psychological protection rather than physical protection. Our show is grounded in a gritty, authentic New York reality and so everything needs to be justified. We came to realise that his superhero costume is anything that anybody could see on the street. It's not red, blue and white spandex and he doesn't go flying through the air wearing it!"



He got the Power. Man.

was that heroes come in all shapes, all sizes, all colours. Heroes can also wear hoodies. I want a world where a kid can wear a hoodie and someone can look at him and give him the benefit of the doubt of who he is.

"The hoodie is utilitarian but at the same time don't get it twisted," stresses Coker. "We know exactly the politics that we're playing and I think that's important. Take Trayvon Martin [the African-American teenager fatally shot by a neighbourhood watch volunteer in Florida in 2012]. I'm the father of twin boys, and to have that conversation with my sons about the fact that there are people who will persecute you for how you look and what you wear... That's a difficult conversation for any

father, particularly a father of African-American kids."

The show finds Cage caught in a power struggle for the soul of uptown, embroiled in the schemes of Harlem nightclub owner Cornell "Cottonmouth" Stokes (Mahershala Ali) and local politician Mariah Dillard (Alfre Woodard). Both characters are lifted from the comic books – though Mariah is no longer the grotesque, gun-toting caricature of the '70s – as is Misty Knight, a Harlem police detective played by Simone Missick.

"Certain things happen that force Luke to use his powers to change things for the better in and around his neighbourhood," Coker tells SFX. "One thing that [executive producer] Jeph



Wearing sunglasses inside: always a sign of coolness.



Hoodie in the hood...

Loeb said that's very important about writing Marvel characters is that by and large they are not happy to have their powers. Wolverine has an adamantium skeleton that he didn't ask for. Even somebody like Spider-Man is haunted by the fact that the one time he could have used his powers would have changed his family's trajectory. The powers are a burden but with these heroes what makes them heroic is what they do despite the challenges that they have. With Luke it's very similar. He's haunted by certain things but at the same time he's driven by the greater good."

STREET LIFE

It's an unseasonably warm March evening in New York. For all the glamorous pulse of the filming there's a crackle of tension in this neighbourhood tonight, hinting at a wider unease in the area. In recent years gentrification has seen longtime residents priced out of the brownstones. Some locals bristle at the presence of the crew, spinning TV fantasy on their streets.

A man passes us on the sidewalk, spots Coker being interviewed. "Coming round this neighbourhood," he mutters. "A cop just got shot round here yesterday!"

Coker continues talking but later he makes a point of acknowledging the interruption.

"It's Brooklyn," he says simply, unapologetically. "He was saying 'Don't think you're special because you're shooting in Brooklyn. Things can happen.' That's the reality of Bed-Stuy. Brooklyn is a place that has an incredible history, so there are always going to be people that feel like if you're not from Brooklyn, if you're an outsider, then you need to recognise and respect what's happening here. That's always been a thing I've done."

"If I'd had the chance to talk to him I would have said, 'Hey, this is a show that you're probably going to think is cool.' I wasn't offended by what he was saying. I felt he was saying we were infringing upon his ability to walk down the street. And so I apologise for that, but it's in service of doing a cool show that I think people are going to dig."

It's time to shoot a scene. A cry of "Running!" moves through the crowd, the word passing in a chain from crewmember to crewmember. On this Brooklyn Street, watched by its residents, Luke Cage is about to go into battle, a hero for the people.

"I just can't wait for you guys to see the show," smiles Coker. "I'm sick of being so secretive about it. It's either the greatest thing out there or it's wack. It's not going to be in-between. You're either going to love it or you're going to hate it. I'm very confident about it but who knows. I'm either really right or I'm really wrong. I just feel incredibly confident that it will, at the very least, be entertaining." ●

GETTY (3)

UNBREAKABLE Essential Luke Cage facts

★ The creation of writer Archie Goodwin and artist John Romita Jr, the bulletproof brawler first appeared in *Luke Cage, Hero For Hire* #1 in 1972.

★ Cage briefly joined the Fantastic Four, replacing the Thing as the team's muscle when Ben Grimm found himself back in human form.

★ Luke Cage isn't his real name - he was born Carl Lucas. Young Nicolas Coppola liked the more heroic surname and rechristened himself Nicolas Cage in tribute.

★ The Comics Code Authority insisted he watch his language. Classic Cage pseudo-swears: "Shoot!" and "Sweet Christmas!"

★ Quentin Tarantino wanted to bring Power Man to the big screen in the '90s, favouring Laurence Fishburne for the role.

★ In 1978 Cage formed a partnership with martial arts hero Iron Fist as their comic books were merged. Iron Fist is also heading to Netflix in 2017.





Superheroes!
Time travellers!
Demons! Meet the
must-see shows
invading your
screens this
autumn!

SUPERGIRL

Maid of Might finally meets the Man of Steel

SEASON 2

US BROADCAST The CW from 10 October
UK BROADCAST Sky 1 from late October

RETURNING SHOW! Superman is

coming. For longtime DC Comics fans, no other words are needed to describe *Supergirl's* second season. Barring the final moments of *Smallville's* finale, the Last Son of Krypton has been missing from live-action TV since *Lois And Clark* ended its run back in 1997. That changes with the addition of former *Teen Wolf* actor Tyler Hoechlin to the cast of *Supergirl*.

"What's important on our show is how they teach one another and the love between them," says star Melissa Benoist of Kara Zor-El's relationship with her legendary cousin. "They're two surviving members of a dying race."

With season two, *Supergirl's* production relocates from Los Angeles to Vancouver, following the show's move from its US TV home on CBS to the CW. Now one of four DC shows on the superhero-friendly network, *Supergirl* will cross over with *The Flash*, *Arrow* and *Legends Of Tomorrow*. "I had so much fun doing the crossover with Grant [Gustin]," says Benoist of her first season team-up with the Scarlet Speedster, "that I'm excited for anything and everything they throw at us."

Other newcomers this season include Floriana Lima as the crimebusting Maggie Sawyer and Ian Gomez as newsman Snapper Carr. Aside from Superman, however, the biggest addition is the original DC TV heroine herself – Wonder Woman Lynda Carter – as the President of the United States.

"Ahhhh! It's amazing," enthuses Benoist. "I haven't met her yet, but I plan on picking her brain. I can't wait to meet her. I'm psyched!" **Joseph McCabe**



Penguin: the new Churchill?

GOTHAM

The Mad Hatter hits town...

SEASON 3

US BROADCAST Fox from 19 September
UK BROADCAST Channel 5, TBC

RETURNING SHOW! Gotham

continues to expand its matchless rogues' gallery in its third season. Executive producer Danny Cannon tells *SFX* that the Illuminati-style Court of Owls will show its sinister hand with the addition of new bad guy, the Mad Hatter.

"We're very lucky that nobody really went back and did an origin story for Mad Hatter, and so we get to touch on that," Cannon says of their treatment of the classic comic book character. "Penguin (Robin Lord Taylor) is going to try and dip his foot into the political pool this year. His relationship with Nygma (Cory Michael Smith) got close, so there was an understanding those two had. While that's going on, we needed a new villain, not part of the structure and chaos that Gotham knows, so Hatter comes to town under the guise of something else."

"His nefarious plan is horrific compared to everybody else," Cannon adds. "We learn where he came from, why he came from, what he's looking for in Gotham and how he intends to get it. The damage he does along the way is catastrophic."

Carter promises a Batcave's worth of twists and reveals. "We get to touch upon a relative of Vicki Vale. And we get to create a brand new villain from within this cast that is terrifying. It's very much of the DC World but it's coming from us, like Fish Mooney was."

And look for a new actor taking over the role of orphan Ivy Pepper. Maggie Geha will play the girl destined to become botanical Bat-villain Poison Ivy. "We get to continue on our path of Ivy and where her mindset came from," Cannon teases.

Tara Bennett

THE EXORCIST

The power of television compels you!

SEASON 1

US BROADCAST Fox from 23 September
UK BROADCAST TBC

NEW SHOW! Horror fans may vomit

pea soup in excitement when Fox's TV take on *The Exorcist* arrives this September. Based on William Peter Blatty's book of the same name, the classic 1973 movie featured Father Merrin battling for the soul of possessed teenager Regan. The show's executive producer Jeremy Slater stresses their main objective was to not rehash the source material, but to deliver a compelling, fresh take that scares the crap out of viewers.

"The original film and novel cast a long shadow, so obviously audiences are going to be disappointed if they tune in for a show called *The Exorcist* and it's not scary," Slater tells *SFX*. "We're talking the Rolls-Royce of horror films. If we screw this up, fans are going to be unforgiving."

The Exorcist finds Angela Rance (Geena Davis) turning to Father Tomas and Father Marcus when she begins to suspect that a demonic force is targeting her family. Slater notes one significant difference between the TV series and the movie is that this time around evil has "grander ambitions".

"Starting with episode two, you're going to see us dramatically expanding the scope of the show, and taking advantage of our Chicago setting," Slater says. "Why has the enemy set sights on this particular city at this particular moment in history? How do we pay off that big twist in the final moments of the pilot? We plan to hit the ground running, and we have a lot of big surprises lined up for the first several episodes."

Bryan Cairns



Best call an... um, exorcist?



THE WALKING DEAD

The eye of the tiger...

- ▶ SEASON 7
- ▶ US BROADCAST AMC from 23 October
- ▶ UK BROADCAST Fox from 24 October

RETURNING SHOW! After introducing Jeffrey Dean Morgan's baseball-wielding antagonist Negan in the season finale, what does the adaptation of Robert Kirkman's zombie-filled comic book do for an encore? According to Kirkman, it gets downright animalistic, introducing two more fan favourite characters – Ezekiel and his pet tiger Shiva.

"We were reaching that point where Ezekiel is in the storyline so it was just a natural progression," says Kirkman. "As we move through the storyline, we'll be bringing more characters in, and some characters will arrive later. There will definitely be other characters that you can see this season and some

surprises coming but right now it's all about Ezekiel and Shiva."

To Kirkman's clear relief, Shiva will be a visual effects creation. "[Executive producer] Gale [Anne Hurd] pointed out that it's not particularly humane to have a live tiger on set, and is also very dangerous for the actors. So I was like, 'Great, no real tiger. I can still come to set. That sounds awesome!' Because I would not have gone to set if there had been a real tiger anywhere near set. So there's no real tiger involved. It's all magic!"

Executive producer Dave Alpert tells *SFX* that, like so much of *The Walking Dead*, Ezekiel and Shiva's introduction on the show will differ from its depiction in print. "That's not going to play out exactly the same as it did in the comic. There'll be a lot of swerves."

Joseph McCabe

Tiger not included.





Lister, Kryten and the Cat decide on "which way?"

RED DWARF

It's still cold outside...

SEASON XI

UK BROADCAST Dave from September

US BROADCAST TBC

RETURNING SHOW! It spent many

years drifting in the wilderness, but now it's safe to say that *Red Dwarf* is well and truly back. After 2012's *Red Dwarf X* marked a spectacular return to form, the show's new Earth home, Dave, picked up the show for two new six-part series, the first of which airs in September. But don't expect any reinvention of the wheel – it'll still be Lister, Rimmer, Kryten and the Cat winding each other up in deep space.

"You're still looking for a great character idea and how can it be expanded into a story, and that hasn't changed at all," says writer/director/co-creator Doug Naylor. "It's science fiction ideas that get you excited and that's just the same really as in the early series."

Sometimes we've gone down a drama route [in the past] because we felt at the time that's what we wanted to do, but I've always been much more comfortable with *Red Dwarf* being a comedy slash science fiction – and maybe leaning very slightly towards silliness. I think that's maybe where our strength is, and I think it's also one of the reasons why the guys like performing in front of an audience so much, because they love clowning."

Series XI and XII filmed back to back on either side of Christmas at Pinewood Studios – pretty much next door to the *Star Wars* movies in a little epicentre of sci-fi. "It was so weird. Some of the *Star Wars* crew came to see the shows. They were really nice, really complimentary. They said, 'Give us tickets, and then we'll show you our sets.' And we went, 'Brilliant!' We gave them tickets. We didn't hear from them again. Still waiting. Still waiting..."

Richard Edwards

THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE

Who's the man?

SEASON 2

US BROADCAST Amazon Prime, TBC

UK BROADCAST Amazon Prime, TBC

RETURNING SHOW! *The Man In The*

High Castle may be based on a relatively thin Philip K Dick novel, but the people behind the Amazon Prime adaptation clearly think there's enough material there to sustain a second season. Indeed, this year the "what if the Allies lost the war?" drama will look beyond the Nazi/Japanese-ruled United States to explore the wider world. "We will explore what's going on in other places on the planet, over time," reveals producer (and Dick's daughter) Isa Dick Hackett. "It's very important to know what else is happening out there. And we are definitely digging in deeper in the Southern states, and exploring what that feels like for the defeated people."

We'll also meet the mysterious, eponymous Man, who's collecting newsreels that feature glimpses of alternate realities where the war had a different result. "It's not Hitler," laughs Dick Hackett. "But if you read the book, you'll know it's not Hitler. We'll just dig deeper into the mythology around the films, and kind of get into that space a little more than we did last season."

As for the question of whether those parallel worlds will bleed into the show's principal timeline, Dick Hackett is slightly more evasive. "Are you asking if it's going to go way sci-fi? You'll have to watch. We did see the different realities at the end of last season, so it's a good question to ask!"

Richard Edwards

That Nazi regime just keeps on doing bad stuff.





He really should be bald as a coot beneath that hat.

WESTWORLD

Saddle up for the darkest frontier...

SEASON 1

US BROADCAST HBO from 9 October

UK BROADCAST Sky Atlantic from October

NEW SHOW! As Stephen Hawking

issues a threat alert for the rise of artificial intelligence, HBO's adaptation of the classic 1973 movie arrives on screen with a contemporary bite.

The premise is intact: in the near future a frontier-themed amusement park lets its guests indulge their every violent, lustful fantasy, a population of robots servicing their desires. Naturally it all short-circuits...

Showrun by *Pushing Daisies* writer Lisa Joy and *Interstellar*'s Jonathan Nolan – brother of Christopher – *Westworld*'s cast includes Jeffrey Wright, Sir Anthony Hopkins and James Marsden. Ed Harris inherits Yul Brynner's role as the lethal android gunslinger, the role that defined the marketing of the original

movie, while Evan Rachel Wood is the park's host, Dolores.

"We made a very conscious choice to start the series through the point of view of Dolores," explains Joy, "so that we could fully be with her in believing the reality and the familial connections she had. And after establishing that empathy, we start to broaden the world."

Exposing the dark underbelly of the *Fantasy Island* dream, it's a show set to engage with some troubling issues.

"Violence and sexual violence have sadly been a fact of human history since the beginning of human history," says Joy. "We really endeavoured for it not to be about the fetishisation of those acts. It is about exploring the crime and establishing the crime, and the torment of the characters within this story. And exploring their stories, hopefully with dignity and depth." **Nick Setchfield**

AGENTS OF SHIELD

Along came a Rider

SEASON 4

US BROADCAST ABC from 20 September

UK BROADCAST E4, TBC

RETURNING SHOW! While Marvel is

conquering all before it on both the big screen and Netflix, the network TV branch of the MCU is finding life rather more challenging. Following the cancellation of *Agent Carter* and the decision not to pick up Mockingbird spin-off *Marvel's Most Wanted*, *Agents Of SHIELD* now finds itself the only MCU show left standing on ABC – and it's been relegated to a later timeslot.

The best way to save the day? Call for a heavyweight comic book icon, a character who – albeit in a different incarnation – has already headlined two movies: Ghost Rider.

"We weren't given a list of characters [we could use]," says *SHIELD*'s co-showrunner Jeff Bell. "*SHIELD*'s original mission was always to find the unusual, the unexpected, and then classify it and see whether or not it needed to be contained. So whether that was the Inhumans or a character with a flaming skull, it gives us an opportunity to get into a world we've never seen before."

While the two Nicolas Cage Ghost Rider movies centred on Johnny Blaze, here we'll see the Robbie Reyes version of the character, with *SHIELD* newcomer Gabriel Luna the man getting his skull set on fire.

"[In the auditions] he had a great strength and intensity," Marvel TV boss Jeph Loeb tells *SFX*. "But also, when you needed it, there was a 'vulnerable-ness' where you go, 'Oh, there's something else going on behind this guy,' as opposed to just an intense vengeance theme. There's a humanity, and we really love the contrast of that."

Richard Edwards



Ghost Rider has one fiery temper.



A somewhat different vibe to the original 1981 film...

ASH VS EVIL DEAD

There's no place like home...

SEASON 2

US BROADCAST Starz from October

UK BROADCAST Virgin Media, TBC

RETURNING SHOW!

Over the course of three cult movies, Bruce Campbell's loveable chainsaw-wielding oaf Ashley Williams has survived hordes of Deadites and Kandarian demons. But does even Ash have what it takes to survive... a family reunion?

After beginning the second season reliving his teen years in the hedonistic splendour of

Jacksonville, Florida, Ash, Bruce Campbell tells *SFX*, is heading home.

"To Elk Grove, Michigan, his hometown," laughs the horror icon, himself a Michigan native. "Because there are some problems there. Our heroes are led to Ash's hometown because there's trouble brewing. And when I say trouble, I'm talking Deadites! So Ash is gonna clean up his home town. You gotta clean up your home town! We meet old friends, we meet relatives. We call back several original characters from the original movie... It's pretty

incredible, and I think the fans' heads are gonna explode."

Adding to the brain haemorrhaging will be fellow *Evil Dead* vets Ted Raimi – playing one of Ash's childhood buddies – and Ellen Sandweiss as Cheryl, the first of Ash's friends to fall victim to a Deadite in the original 1981 *Evil Dead*. Also joining the mayhem is *Six Million Dollar Man* star Lee Majors as Ash's dad – who Campbell promises will be even more cantankerous than his clueless son.

Ash's trademark weapons continue to arm the show with pure cool. "We already got a guy without a hand," Campbell tells *SFX*, "we got time travel, we got a boomstick and a chainsaw. We don't need anything else."

Joseph McCabe

FOUR FOR 2017 Next year's unmissable shows



AMERICAN GODS

Neil Gaiman's Hugo Award-winning novel is brought to the screen by Bryan Fuller. Chronicling the struggle for survival of old gods and mythological figures in a new world of deities like technology, it stars Ricky Whittle as Shadow and Ian McShane as his employer Mr Wednesday.



STAR TREK: DISCOVERY

Bryan Fuller returns to his SF TV roots with this continuation of the "Prime" *Star Trek* universe. Set on board the USS Discovery – a ship inspired by designs for the never-produced '70s TV show *Star Trek: Phase Two* – we're promised a series true to Roddenberry's vision of diversity and hope.



POWERLESS

The first live-action TV comedy set within the DC Universe, the show focuses on employees at an insurance company whose lives are complicated by living in a world in which Superman and Batman actually exist – along with plenty of more obscure DC heroes and villains.



TIME AFTER TIME

Before Nicholas Meyer helmed *Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan*, he wrote and directed time-travel thriller *Time After Time*. Chronicling HG Wells's efforts to stop Jack the Ripper in 20th century San Francisco, the story gets updated by *Vampire Diaries* creator Kevin Williamson.



THE FLASH

Getting right to the 'Point

- ▶ SEASON 3
- ▶ US BROADCAST The CW from 4 October
- ▶ UK BROADCAST Sky 1 from late October, TBC

RETURNING SHOW!

Remember how *Fringe* had a thing for hitting the reset button? *The Flash* ventured into similar territory in its season two finale, when Barry Allen travelled back in time and saved his mum from death by Reverse-Flash. It's the sort of behaviour that wreaks havoc with timelines, meaning that, at the start of season three, Central City is a very different place. "Obviously Barry's parents are alive, which changes the whole dynamic of our show," series star Grant Gustin tells *SFX*.

"Barry never went to live with Joe and Iris, so Iris and Barry don't really have a relationship."

If this sounds a little familiar, that's because season three riffs on DC's famous comics

crossover *Flashpoint*. "We do a lot of cool nods to [cartoon adaptation] *The Flashpoint Paradox*," explains Gustin. "But it's not that animated movie, and it's not the comic book. Our version is what *Flashpoint* would be in the universe that we've created, and how things would have changed."

So anyone playing "spot the difference" will notice that Hogwarts graduate Tom Felton has joined the cast as one of Barry's co-workers, while Iris's little brother Wally West has adopted his comic-book mantle, Kid Flash. Not that anyone else thinks anything is weird. "Barry's the only one who knows all of the differences," Gustin reveals. "And while he is the only one that knows, he does slowly start to forget the original timeline. Kind of like a *Back To The Future*-esque thing, which is a pretty cool element." **Richard Edwards**

Keiynan Lonsdale races into the role of Kid Flash.



Bloody hoodies.

ARROW

Is Oliver still hitting the target?

SEASON 5

US BROADCAST The CW from 5 October

UK BROADCAST Sky 1 from late October, TBC

RETURNING SHOW!

This is an important year for *Arrow*, the show that kicked off DC's massively successful TV universe. The series was originally envisioned with a five-season arc, and that means that we'll see Oliver Queen's flashbacks catching up with the events of season one. "This year, in a lot of ways, is like the end of a chapter," star Stephen Amell tells *SFX*. "It's not the end of the show, but the show was conceived and pitched as a five-year journey, through the flashbacks to the present day. There's a real sense of urgency right now with the flashbacks, and we feel like, 'Okay, we have to get from point A to point B, and Oliver has to accomplish all of these things.' I feel like the flashbacks

will be a big bonus to the show this year."

Season five begins with Team Arrow in disarray, looking for new recruits while Oliver gets used to being the new mayor of Star City. "Felicity wants a new home, because Oliver is out there on his own and as a result is being a shit mayor because he doesn't have any time," Amell explains. "Oliver wants the old team to come back. He wants John to come back, he wants Thea to come back. The first couple of episodes are really wrestling with the idea of whether they are going to come back. And we go from there."

Like *Legends Of Tomorrow*, *Arrow* will also be affected by the timeline-fiddling events over on *The Flash*. "I don't know if *Flashpoint* affects Barry and Oliver's relationship," Amell teases, "but it definitely affects our universe and our show in ways that I think people will be pretty blown away by." **Richard Edwards**

LEGENDS OF TOMORROW

Legends meet Legion

SEASON 2

US BROADCAST The CW, 13 October

UK BROADCAST Sky 1, early November, TBC

RETURNING SHOW!

"We sort of went into season two with the attitude that season one was good, it wasn't great," reveals *Legends Of Tomorrow's* remarkably candid showrunner Marc Guggenheim. "We found our hands tied a lot by our own concept; the fact that you've got Vandal Savage for 16 episodes, you know that for 15 of those episodes, you can't catch him. With the nature of Rip Hunter's family dying at the beginning, it's kind of a downer. But you want to have fun. You don't want Rip to always be wringing his hands over his dead wife and son. This year, we were able to bring ourselves up from all of that. We have a really cool Big Bad..."

Though actually, he really means "Big Bads", as the *Legends'* principal adversaries will be a bona fide Legion of Doom: Malcolm Merlyn, Damien Darhk, the Reverse-Flash and Captain Cold, the latter a former Legend. There's also the small matter of proto-Justice League the Justice Society of America entering the fray. "It's probably going to involve the biggest fight sequence that we've committed to film so far," says Guggenheim. "It's two superhero teams battling it out – if we've got more than one superhero occupying a space in any given time, they have to start fighting. We're really playing into the idea that the JSA are the world's first superhero team. They're confident. They're practised. They're professional. And you have the Legends of Tomorrow, who are none of those things. It's fun to play the contrast between the two."

Richard Edwards



Rip Hunter lets rip.



Shooting skywards?
Watch out, God!

SUPERNATURAL

Hello, mum!

► **SEASON 12**
► **US BROADCAST** The CW from 13 October
► **UK BROADCAST** E4, TBC

RETURNING SHOW! After a remarkable 11 seasons of monster hunting, Sam (Jared Padalecki) and Dean Winchester (Jensen Ackles) suddenly have to figure out how the resurrection of their long-dead mother, Mary Winchester (Samantha Smith) will impact... well, everything.

Andrew Dabb, the long-time staff writer-turned-newest showrunner, says the return of their late parent after 30 years won't be an easy adjustment for the Winchester boys. "It's not a reality where either of them is sad she's back in any way, shape or form," Dabb tells *SFX*. "It's more a matter that this is a real person we have to deal with on a day-to-day basis now. We

don't want to drive an unnecessary wedge between Sam and Dean, and I don't believe Mary will do that, but there will be differences of opinion and there will be things raised that not everybody is on board with. The show revolves around Sam and Dean, and how they react to her is really the core of the season."

And then there's the resolution of Sam getting shot in last season's finale. Dabb teases, "Initially Sam is in trouble and Dean is extremely driven to save his brother. As this thing becomes more personal, and we come to understand the British Men of Letters and their point of view, our guys will have different reactions. I believe when the cards are down, Sam and Dean are on the same page all the time, which is to do the right thing. But what is the right thing for either one of them is not always agreed upon." **Tara Bennett**



Misha Collins says Castiel has "got his mojo back".



Mark Sheppard's Crowley is set to have a bigger role this season.

FREQUENCY

Time travel movie tear-jerker gets a gender twist

► **SEASON 1**
► **US BROADCAST** The CW from 5 October
► **UK BROADCAST** TBC

NEW SHOW! Remember *Frequency*, 2000's heartbreaker of a movie that starred Dennis Quaid and Jim Caviezel as a father and son able to communicate through time via ham radio? That premise is getting new life as a CW series that swaps genders as New York cop Raimy Sullivan (Peyton List) is able to talk to her long-deceased dad, Frank (Riley Smith), via their cosmically attuned radios.

Executive producer Jeremy Carver tells *SFX* the gender swap occurred after The CW expressed interest in the series. "We had another version of this that was father/son and hewed closer to the movie. But when we went to The CW, they said they loved it but asked if there was anything we would change. I said with time and hindsight, I would change the central relationship because it would free us from the original movie and was creatively more exciting."

"The idea of changing it to a father/daughter relationship felt more dynamic and much richer," Carver continues. "I think people have an idea of what 'daddy's little girl' is and this isn't daddy's little girl. I don't see a dynamic like this on TV right now and I found that really challenging."

As Raimy and Frank begin to change history, the pair will have to navigate a mixed timeline that will impact the course of history. "There's a mystery at the heart of it so you have to pay attention," Carver teases. "They are constantly confronted with being two very ordinary people living an extraordinary existence."

Tara Bennett

Raimy Sullivan (Peyton List) tunes into more than just Radio Luxembourg.





TIMELESS

A fight across the fourth dimension

SEASON 1

US BROADCAST NBC from 3 October

UK BROADCAST TBC

NEW SHOW! Hopping through time can

be messy. *The Terminator*, *Doctor Who*, *Back To The Future* and countless other shows and movies clearly established one cardinal rule above any other: even the slightest change in the past can cause irrevocable damage to the future. And that's exactly what Garcia Flynn (Goran Visnjic) is counting on in *Timeless*. NBC's enticing new show finds Flynn, a time machine thief, bent on rewriting history for his own agenda.

"If you have a terrorist who gets his hands on a time machine and is set on destroying the United States, that's really scary," executive producer Eric Kripke tells *SFX*. "He doesn't have to set off a bomb somewhere. He can just make sure when Winston Churchill gets hit by a car in the 1930s, he doesn't survive."

Homeland Security assembles a ragtag team – including history professor Lucy (Abigail Spencer), scientist Rufus (Malcolm Barrett) and Delta Force veteran Wyatt (Matt Lanter) – to chase him down in an old time machine prototype. They must prevent the meddlesome Flynn from altering the timeline, even as they deal with their own impulse to do the same thing themselves.

"Wyatt's incredibly tempted to use the time machine to amend what happened to his wife," Kripke explains. "He's wrestling between his professional mission and private desires."

As for when Flynn will strike next, Kripke cites a long list of monumental dates that are under consideration.

"We're seriously talking about the Lincoln assassination, World War II, Watergate, the Moon landing, the Alamo, the American Revolution, gangsters and the Old West," Kripke shares. "The possibilities are endless."

Bryan Cairns

"Did anyone get the number of that giant tractor that hit us last night?!"



The Vampire Diaries closes this year.

NOT ONLY BUT ALSO

The Vampire Diaries It's the final season at last, and the Salvatore brothers must decide what matters most to them, once and for all... **Once Upon A Time** Karen David plays Jasmine, Deniz Akdeniz takes on Aladdin and Oded Fehr is Jafar in a season adapting Disney's animated classic... **Grimm** Monroe and Rosalee have a baby on the way in season six...

The Last Man On Earth Season three promises more awkward comedy as well as another bold attempt to repopulate the Earth... **The Good Place** Kristen Bell stars as a woman who dies and enters the wrong part of the Afterlife – the part where everyone is too nice to each other...

People Of Earth The Office USA's Greg Daniels presents a new comedy about a support group for alien abductees... **Humans** *Matrix* star Carrie-Anne Moss – no stranger to machine intelligence – joins the cast of the AI drama for a second season...

Falling Water Three strangers discover they're dreaming fragments of the same dream in a new US supernatural show... **Him** ITV explores the dark side of suburbia in a three-part tale of domestic horror, written by Paula Milne...

Class Doctor Who gets a teen-focused spin-off from award-winning YA novelist Patrick Ness... **Black Mirror** Charlie Brooker's provocative, zeitgeist-baiting anthology show returns, now on Netflix...

Incorporated Produced by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, this new Syfy entry explores the dark future of corporate power... **Crazyhead** Cara Theobald and Susan Wokoma go demon-slaying in a new comedy horror from *Misfits* creator Howard Overman... **Dirk Gently** Another shot at TV life for Douglas Adams's holistic 'tec, written by Max Landis for BBC America... **From Dusk Till Dawn** The Gecko Brothers assemble a team to face hellish new foes in season three.

Class Produced by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, this new Syfy entry explores the dark future of corporate power... **Crazyhead** Cara Theobald and Susan Wokoma go demon-slaying in a new comedy horror from *Misfits* creator Howard Overman... **Dirk Gently** Another shot at TV life for Douglas Adams's holistic 'tec, written by Max Landis for BBC America... **From Dusk Till Dawn** The Gecko Brothers assemble a team to face hellish new foes in season three.



Will *Class* have class?

TOM ELLIS

Lucifer's back... and his Satanic majesty requests your presence

Words by Stephen Kelly /// Photography by Maarten de Boer

The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was going from a supporting role in *Miranda* – Britain's wackiest sitcom – to leading one of America's hottest new shows: *Lucifer*, the strange and not-entirely-serious story of Satan's crime-solving adventures in LA.

It's a show that initially confused the critics, who felt it was fluffy, disposable and nothing like the comics it was based on, which were themselves a spin-off from Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*. But the show eventually found its feet – becoming something fun, snappy and deceptively deep. This was helped, of course, by Tom Ellis, whose portrayal of Lucifer was cheeky and charming; whose charisma was able to power the show even through its most frivolous of moments, ensuring that fans stuck around to see it all truly pay off.

On a sweltering day in June, *SFX* caught up with Ellis to talk the reaction to series one, what's to come in series two and – the big question – just who the hell is Lucifer's mother?

It's fair to say that – at first, at least – critics were not fans of *Lucifer*. But the series did start to click into place as it progressed, and found a loyal audience. Do you think we write off shows too easily?

☛ There's a lot of pre-conceived ideas of what people think the show might be. We got a lot of viewers to start with, but what's been nice is the gradual increase in our fan base. And I think that's mainly because people have been surprised about the show. It is a fun show, it's an entertaining show. It's not going to change the world. For a lot of people stuff has to be edgy and people – certainly critics – can be a bit snobby about stuff that isn't. I mean, when *Miranda* started we had quite a lot of snobby people saying "what is this ridiculous show?" and then, despite themselves, people started to like it. And I think that's what's happening here.

What's attracted that fan base, do you think?

☛ Around the world, culturally, there is a devil character in each religion. So there's an air of intrigue among people because of that. But I think the reason this has done so well is because it's been a different spin on it: the devil not wanting to be the devil anymore, and him on a road to redemption. I think in a lot of devil stories he's this sort of

fixed character; he is evil and that's that. This one's about an evolution of that character.

Given how many version of the devil there are, how did you even begin to approach this as a role?

☛ A lot of it was in the script. Tom Kapinos, who created *Californication*, wrote the original pilot script and does antihero characters well. But the more I was reading it the more it was reminding me of the Peter Cook *Bedazzled* movie. I'm a big Cook fan and that was a big inspiration.

Did you find it difficult to balance the quippy nature of *Lucifer* with some of the heavier, more dramatic stuff?

☛ It's a fine line. The nice thing was that when we shot the pilot we had a bit more time than you usually would have. So if we weren't sure about stuff tonally we would try it lots of different ways. We had options when it came to getting the show together. The hardest thing when you're making something is finding out what your show is – you don't always know that when you're filming.

Where do you think *Lucifer* needs to go next?

☛ I think the show really hit its stride by about the middle of the first season. And I think the reason that happened was because there was this story about his wings being stolen. And for the first time you realise that the stakes are higher than you thought. And the way that we left season one with mum escaping hell – that means that for our main characters the stakes are all higher at the beginning of season two. And so I think, with the stakes being high, our stories will resonate better and the series will kick off faster. But you know, more of the same too! The nice thing is when you do a second season you get to iron out the creases, and evaluate what is working and what isn't working so well.

Do you think series two will start opening up the relationship between Lucifer and his father?

☛ I think it's at the core of Lucifer's troubles, of what's propelling him. Seeking some sort of peace or resolution is not something I think he's actively looking for but something that he needs to find. We will continue opening that up. Otherwise it would be a sort of glib, flippant thing. And I think we need to earn those dramatic moments, they're important. It's nice to make people laugh and then pull the rug beneath their feet with something like "A Priest Walks Into A Bar", where we started to explore theology. All of a sudden our audience realised that they're a lot more invested than they thought they were. ●

Lucifer returns to Amazon Prime in September.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Actor

Born

→ 17 November 1978

From

→ Cardiff, Wales

Greatest Hits

→ *Lucifer*, *Rush*, *Miranda*

Random Fact

→ You might recognise Ellis from *Doctor Who*. He played Martha Jones's handsome doctor friend in "Last Of The Time Lords".

“THE STAKES
ARE HIGHER
AT THE
BEGINNING OF
SEASON TWO”

EVIL UNDER

The apocalypse moves south of the border as
FEAR THE WALKING DEAD returns.
Joseph McCabe is on set in Mexico

×



THE SUN



RETURNING SHOW!



SEASON 2.5

US BROADCAST: AMC from 21 August

UK BROADCAST: AMC on BT TV from 22 August

Nightmares aren't always conquered with the flick of a light switch, and sometimes sunshine doesn't drive the shadows away. Want proof? Look no further than *Fear The Walking Dead*'s second season.

Created by Robert Kirkman and Dave Erickson, the *Walking Dead* spin-off's first year examined the early days of the zombie virus, in a Los Angeles bursting apart at the seams. Its newly formed family of survivors barely escaped with their lives, taking to the high seas in a luxury yacht captained by the mysterious Victor Strand. But as zombie fans well know, hope, no matter what form it takes, has a way of abandoning you in an apocalypse. And so

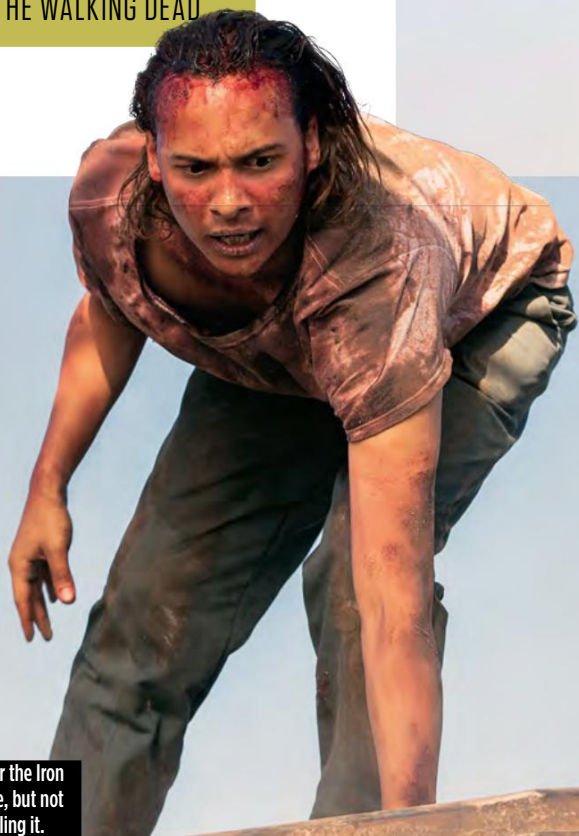
the first half of *Fear The Walking Dead*'s second season saw the Clarks, the Manawases and the Salazars facing even greater danger. Now on the run in Baja, Mexico, the group has been splintered by troubles inside and out, in a land made somehow all the more macabre by its balmy breezes and beaches.

When *SFX* arrives in the real Baja, we find it's just as stunning as its on-screen counterpart, though we receive a far friendlier reception than *Fear The Walking Dead*'s protagonists – especially when we arrive at Baja Studios, where the show is shot. Famous within the filmmaking world for its massive water tanks, it's played host to some of the biggest ocean-bound epics in film history, including *Titanic* and *Master And Commander*. With *Fear* landlocked in the second half of this season, Strand's boat, the Abigail, is, unfortunately, in the midst of being disassembled. But we can still spot its remains bobbing in a large tank on the studio's perimeter.

Showrunner Dave Erickson, back in LA with his writers, joins us via Skype when we enter the facility's production offices. Wasting no time, we ask him what we can expect in the season's back half.

"Fracture is the operative word," he replies, and explains how *Fear The Walking Dead* will take a long, unforgiving look at its characters on their own before reuniting them.

"Fundamentally, when we started, the show was a drama. It was the story of a blended family. One of the interesting things about Travis and Madison, especially Travis, is that he's tried desperately to bring this family together. He's really tried to force, in some instances, a square peg into a round hole. With the pressure of that, the pressure of the apocalypse, the pressure on all of our characters coming off of the boat and the disappointment they find when they finally arrive at the compound, there's a fracture in the family. That's one of the challenges →



Trying for the Iron Man pose, but not quite nailing it.

they're going to face. As desperately as they've tried to maintain some semblance of family, they fail at that abysmally before they can start to put that back together."

In addition to the immediate dangers facing its heroes, Erickson tells us *Fear* will continue to be fuelled by the very things that distinguish it from *The Walking Dead*.

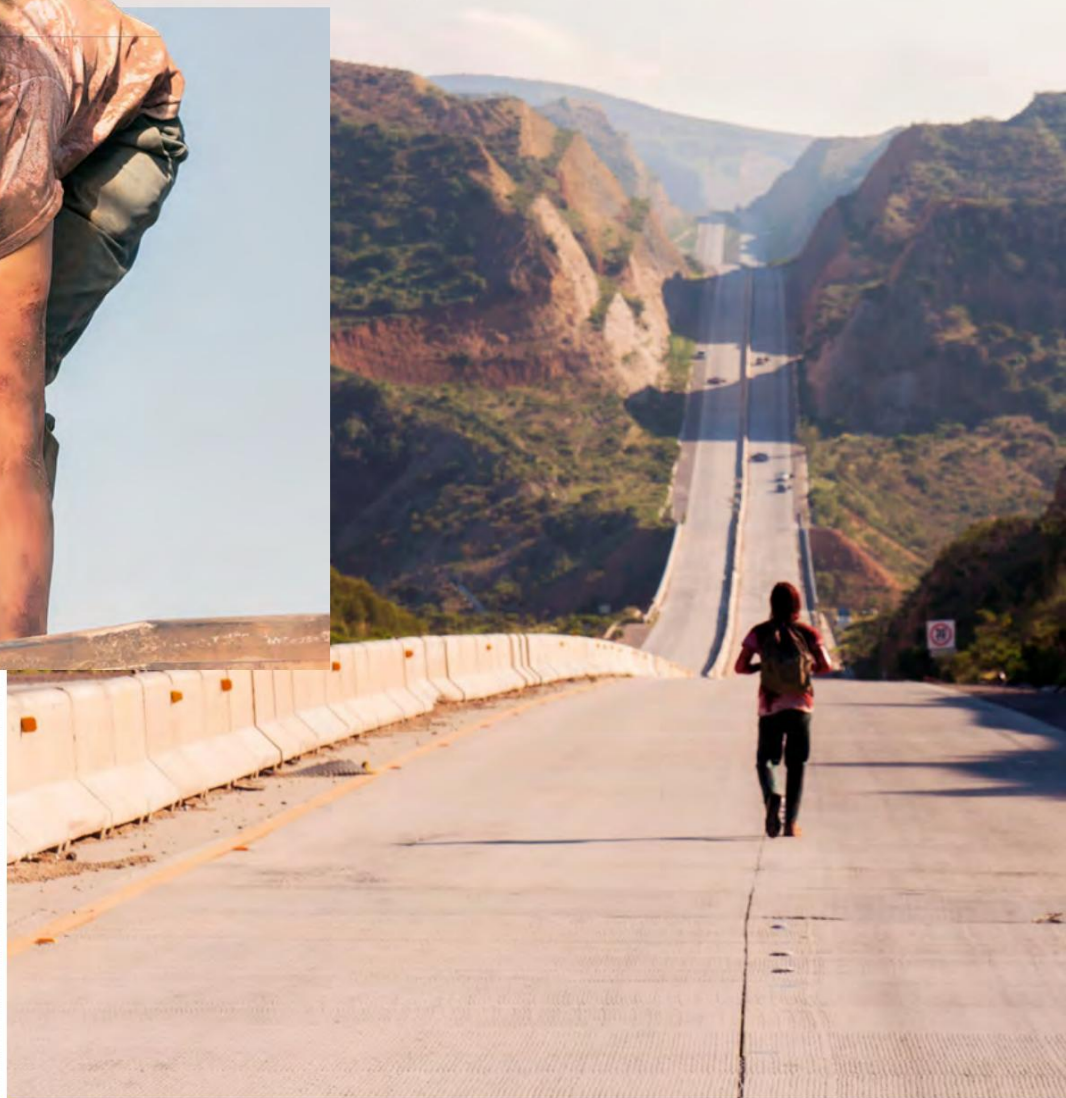
"Because we started earlier, we had an opportunity to build the character dynamics and the family dynamics before the apocalypse was full blown. If you watch the trajectory of this season, all of the issues, all of the problems, all the conflicts between our characters, really stem from what we established in the pilot."

MODERN FAMILY

Erickson cites Madison's son Nick as an example. "He's not shooting heroin anymore, but his attraction to the dead, his sort of need to pursue that darkness, is consistent with somebody who's looking for his fix. He's looking at it in an effort to explore what his place is in this world. Why did he survive when so many have died? There's almost a spiritual quality to this pursuit. For Madison, she sees repeated behaviour. As the mother of an addict, for her this is not about spiritual exploration. This is somebody who's getting a physiological response to something. He's getting a rush off of it. That's an element of their relationship that started in the pilot and before; it's something we can continue to play out and dig into. That mother-son dynamic is important."

Similarly, the relationship between Travis and Chris will be tested once more now they are separated from Madison and her children.

"All of the dysfunction, the anger, the resentment that Chris has, he would have had



"I want so much blood that people vomit... Is that too much to ask?"

that regardless. He would have had that if the apocalypse had never happened. It would have been a very tense, very challenging, very difficult relationship. But the fact that Travis had to shoot Chris's mom has only exacerbated that problem. So that story continues to play out."

But the family's dynamic, adds Erickson, is just one way that *Fear* is forging its own path.

"The other obvious element is, if you track our timeline, we haven't reached Rick Grimes' waking up. Right now, Rick is still in a coma in Georgia. We also don't have the benefit as yet of the CDC episodes in the original show. We don't have one person saying, 'This is a global event. This is our extinction.' That creates a

Well that's no way to keep an eye on things.





Sure, lots of people may be dead, but you've got to appreciate the lack of traffic.

dynamic, at least for this season and going into season three, where we have a group of people who have to believe there's still something out there. It's something that Chris and Travis discuss specifically when we get to an early episode in this back half. Which is, 'We have to hold on long enough. Because someone, somewhere must be fixing this.' Where we don't deviate from the comic or the original show is, we'll never be about finding a cure. There's no cause. That's sort of the guideline for *The Walking Dead*, coming off the comic.

"Those are two elements that give us a little bit of room to explore," says the showrunner. "Elements we don't see as often or elements

that we see slightly differently on the original show. Finally, the reality is that as we do get deeper into the show – and this is not specific to *The Walking Dead* and *Fear*, it's really specific to any apocalyptic drama – if we are going to get to a place to stay that we can call sanctuary, we need to protect that place once we get there. There are certain tropes that are unavoidable. I don't think that's a bad thing necessarily. I think that it's just part of the genre."

Nick may be the first to find such a place this season, as he becomes part of a colonia (a Mexican colony or neighbourhood) inhabited by some of the country's own survivors.

"I've been at the colonia for a while," actor Frank Dillane tells *SFX* as we watch him shoot a scene in the season's eleventh episode, one in which Nick takes on a leadership role, and prepares to negotiate on behalf of the ramshackle town with some deadly bandits. "We're trading water and drugs; and it's come to pass that a lot of people are leaving the colonia. Which is dangerous for a few reasons. It's bad for morale. And also the less people we have the less we have if the gangsters decide to attack. So I'm brokering a deal with one of the scouts, to perhaps do something different than what has been said we should do."

INDEPENDENT WOMAN

Star Mercedes Mason tells us Ofelia is also establishing her independence, in the wake of her father's death in the midseason finale.

"She's completely rocked. She's at the lowest she can be," says Mason. "That's going to change her emotionally a lot, and it will make her understand that when you have nothing to lose, when there's no one else you have to answer to, then you absolutely can go off on your own and live your own life. That's huge for her. In the second half, episode three and on, you start discovering things about her past. That she's going to go looking for someone, and she's going to be desperate to find him or her."

Despite Ofelia's deepening journey, Mason's own fear is that her character will, in the time-honoured tradition of *The Walking Dead*, be killed off.

"I worry every day. You never know. With these shows there's bloodlusting. Thank you, *Game Of Thrones*! Ned Stark's head has now ruined it for everyone else. Everybody wants some blood. So we just keep ingratiating ourselves to fans."

But if she has to go, she says, she wants to go big.

"I wanna have a full-on Shakespearean death. I want to be stabbed by a dozen people. I want to swallow a hand grenade so my head pops off. I want so much blood that people vomit... Is that too much to ask? I want children to cower!"

"I have dreams," she says with a wink. ●

STRANDED!

Colman Domingo is *Fear The Walking Dead's* wild card...



What's in store for Victor Strand in season 2.5?

➔ The places where we all began with this show, we couldn't be further from them. We've become something different. That's what an apocalypse will do to you. It'll bring out the ugliest stuff and the best stuff. My character has a journey of being deconstructed. It's less about the suit. He's becoming more human in a way.

How has Strand's perception of Madison changed?

➔ There's one scene where Kim [Dickens] and I are drunk in a bar. And Kim gets upset thinking about her family. She's breaking glasses, and of course the dead arise and we have to fight our way out. Kim smashes a bottle over someone's head and Strand is looking at her like, "Oh my god. Where did THIS come from?" Then we have a scene where some big dude's following her – we're still drunk – and I see she's stabbing the guy in the stomach with a bottle. I'm like, "Oh my god!" The women are the bad asses in this show [laughs].

What's the best part of filming in Mexico?

➔ There's a bar here that Russell Crowe made, called the Monkey Bar. Because he wanted his cocktail the moment he got off set. He didn't want to go down to Rosarito [laughs]. Baja Studios has such great history with these epic films. We're the first television series to shoot here. I love it because we're not sharing it with other shows. This is our home.

In an exclusive interview, Richard Edwards talks to legendary producer **GALE ANNE HURD** about *Fear The Walking Dead* and her glittering sci-fi career

Portrait by Smalls + Raskind

The *Terminator*, *Aliens*, *The Abyss*... Not a bad way to launch your career in movies. And since producing that trio of James Cameron-directed classics, Gale Anne Hurd has continued to make her mark as one of the most successful producers in Hollywood, with the likes of *Armageddon* and *Hulk* among the standouts on a glittering CV. These days, however, she's best known for what she's doing on the telly, as one of the key creative forces behind *The Walking Dead* and its spin-off, *Fear The Walking Dead*. *SFX* sat down for a chat with Hurd to talk about blazing a trail in Hollywood – and of course, zombie invasions in Los Angeles...

The California/Pacific/Mexico setting of *Fear The Walking Dead*'s second season couldn't be more different to the parent show's Atlanta backdrop. Was it always the intention to play with the format?

☞ Yes, it was important to distinguish the show completely. This is building out another part of that universe, seeing what was happening before in another city as the world fell. And there were lots of opportunities with Los

Angeles, city of reinvention, a city of immigrants. It's very multi ethnic and it's surrounded by both mountains and the ocean. Many fans have said, "There's one safe place, I know where I would go and that would be out to sea." So now we get to show them whether that was the right idea – and once you've seen the episodes it's maybe not so much.

You also didn't start out with obvious analogues to characters in the parent show...

☞ No, because it was important we had fractured families. We have an immigrant family, the Salazars, who ostensibly came to LA to escape violence in El Salvador, and then we pull out the rug from Ofelia, the daughter who finds out that her father was not an innocent victim, but he was a perpetrator of the violence. So that's something completely different. And then we have no police officers, we don't have anyone who's used to a position of authority or law enforcement, or a crack shot with a gun.

Given *The Walking Dead*'s massive success, were you concerned about messing with a winning formula?

☞ I think what we did embrace was the rules of Robert Kirkman's zombie universe, but that was →

Hurd on set making *Fear The Walking Dead*.



GALE



FORCE



intentional because this is building out another part of that universe, seeing what was happening before in another city as the world fell. But they're never going to be super fast zombies, they're not going to have super strength – that's the one thing we're keeping within the rules of the universe.

Your CV is dominated by science fiction. Have you always been a fan?

☛ Always, oh my goodness! From the time I could read I was reading comic books, science fiction and fantasy and horror, and that was long before it was fashionable – and especially long before it was perceived as something that girls should be doing. Now there are comic cons for all of us. There weren't back then, but I didn't mind being an early geek, and I was very lucky because – to quote *The Hangover* – I found my wolf pack. I started working for Roger Corman in 1978 and he was making B-movies back then, but those movies have become the tentpoles that are saving the studios today.

What was it that appealed to you about the genre as a kid?

☛ If we look at the history of science fiction, it's predicted every kind of chaos, threat, invention that the world has experienced since those great writers were writing – whether it was Jules Verne or Ray Bradbury or Heinlein or Asimov or Philip K Dick, you name it, they envisioned it. I think it's so hilarious that a few

With James Cameron promoting *Aliens*.



months ago Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk and a whole lot of people came out and said, "You know, sentient robots and AI could be dangerous." And honestly, Jim [Cameron] and I called each other and said, "Didn't they just see *The Terminator* in 1984!" That's the funny thing, that science fiction is often so far ahead of science, and it takes science so long to catch up. But we should be thinking about these things. We should be thinking about the lessons we can learn from the great science fiction, fantasy and horror writers.

Did you suspect that SF could become as dominant in popular culture as it is now?

☛ I wish I could say I was prescient. All I knew

was that I loved the fact that there was money available to make more and more of the movies that I liked. But I didn't see it as, "Oh, now I can cash in." The problem is that it also allows people who don't love and respect the genre to make really crappy movies. People are always predicting the genre's demise on television and in films, and it hasn't happened yet. Because there have been really great movies – even ones not made for a huge budget like *Ex Machina*, which I thought was a tremendous movie. So people keep saying that genre is dead, that the pendulum's going to swing the other way, but as long as there are great movies from great creators that's not going to be the case.

Of course, you got in there early with the explosion of comic book movies, when you produced *Hulk* back in 2003...

☛ It was so funny when we started out on *Hulk*. That was the first time people said that comic book movies were dead! The development of visual effects has really helped since then – the costs are less, you can turn the shots around faster and you can do more – but I've always really liked grounded science fiction. We needed CGI to bring the Hulk to life, but we didn't need it for *The Punisher*.

Your career was mostly movies before *The Walking Dead*.

What prompted the move to the small screen?

☛ It's interesting because right now television allows you to tell far more character-driven stories than features. You have two and a

half hours maximum to tell a story, so – if it's an original – you have to set up the world, build up the characters and then have a resolution. Well, with *Fear The Walking Dead* we have almost 15 hours of character-driven story, we can really get into each character and that's not something that feature films allow you anymore. So in the time that it takes me to make one of the bigger feature films, which is two years, I can tell 30 hours of *Fear The Walking Dead*.

Does the speed of shooting TV echo the pace of some of your earlier movies?

☛ No, gosh... An episode of *Fear The Walking Dead*, that's 43 minutes, shoots in eight days. *The Terminator* was less than two hours, and we shot in 58 days – and that was considered fast! *Aliens* was 75 days, *The Abyss* was 113, so what I think is being achieved now in television is absolutely remarkable. And we all know that shooting on the water, as we did on *The Abyss*, it's not easy, and we're turning around these episodes in eight days! ●

“Science fiction is often so far ahead of science, and it takes science so long to catch up”

**IN THE SHADOWS
OF GOTHAM CITY,**
DR HARLEEN QUINZEL (A.K.A. HARLEY
QUINN) ORCHESTRATES A BREAKOUT
FROM ARKHAM ASYLUM---



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ENTERTAINMENT



When the organisers of *Star Wars* Celebration booked London's ExCeL Centre for this year's do, they probably had little idea we'd be just a few stops on the Docklands Light Railway from an actual *Star Wars* location. Before we made our pilgrimage to Canary Wharf tube station (as seen in the *Rogue One* trailer), however, we thought it might be best to take in some bona fide *Star Wars* news. Here are the biggest stories we dug up between the merchandise, the cosplay and the mind-boggling number of people getting *Star Wars* tattoos on site...

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story marks out new territory for the series. *The Force Awakens* may be the biggest movie ever made by someone other than James Cameron, but that was a continuation of an old story, and a long-awaited return for screen icons like Han Solo, Princess Leia and (albeit briefly) Luke Skywalker. *Rogue One*, however, is a standalone tale about a bunch of unknown Rebel fighters on the hunt for the Death Star plans that kickstart *A New Hope* – with Mon Mothma the most famous representative of the good side, will the punters

still care about *Episode 3.9*? Going on the reaction of the *Star Wars* faithful to Celebration's *Rogue One* panel, the answer is a resounding yes. Even new Big Bad, Director Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn), got a standing ovation when he arrived in the hall in full Imperial regalia, flanked by a pair of new-look Deathtroopers.

As well as the behind-the-scenes sizzle reel that Lucasfilm released online immediately after the panel, we were treated to a Celebration-only teaser. Not too much new footage, but we did see Felicity Jones's Jyn Erso as a child, and Darth Vader's silhouette in the trailer's final shot. "I can't tell you what role he plays in the film because I don't want to give

that away," teased director Gareth Edwards. (He did, however, reveal that Vader will say the word "Power".)

Beyond that, we learned the names of a couple of planets – the tropical paradise planet with the AT-ACTs is called Scarif (the Maldives in real life), while the more deserty world (the *Star Wars* galaxy is packed with them, it seems) is Jedha. "Essentially the Mecca of *Star Wars* in that people go to on pilgrimages," revealed Edwards.

We also got a bit more info on the characters, like the fact that Riz Ahmed's pilot Bodhi Rook still works for the Empire while moonlighting for the Rebellion – "People work for big organisations, they don't believe in everything



Ben Mendelsohn with Death Star (not to scale).



Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) on a break from rebelling.



Director Orson Krennic lets the occasion go to his head. You would, wouldn't you?



From London's Docklands to a galaxy far, far away...
Richard Edwards rounds up the big news from
STAR WARS: CELEBRATION

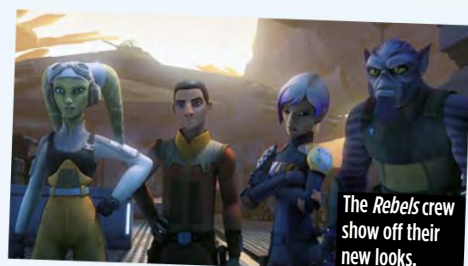
A WEEKEND LONG



Rogue One stars Jiang Wen and Riz Ahmed.



Grand Admiral Thrawn: a man with a perennial case of the blues.



The *Rebels* crew show off their new looks.



Imperial officers know how to party.

they do," he said – and that Jyn's dad Galen (Mads Mikkelsen) has an intriguing history. "I can say that's he's a scientist and he at one point invented something so beautiful, so fantastic that it might change the universe," said the actor.

STAR WARS: REBELS

At first glance, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the biggest news ahead of *Star Wars Rebels*' third season was cosmetic: young Padawan Ezra Bridger's got a buzzcut; Mandalorian Sabine's changed her hair colour again; lone Jedi Kanan (recently blinded by Darth Maul) has grown a beard! But there's much more to be excited about in the proto-Rebellion – and not just because, as executive producer Dave Filoni put it, "We're trying to fuse the looks of our show and the look of *Rogue One*, bringing the colourful things in our world closer to that."

For starters, there's a Time Lord presence, as Tom Baker shows up to voice a giant Force-sensitive being called the Bendu. And then there's the "whip fans into a frenzy" news that Grand Admiral Thrawn, blue-skinned nemesis of the old Expanded Universe, is showing up as this year's Big Bad. He'll be voiced by *Sherlock's* Lars Mikkelsen (brother of *Rogue One's* Mads), and his creator, Timothy Zahn, is writing a new *Thrawn* novel.

Throw in a new jetpack for Sabine, a darksaber and some Empire-affiliated Mandalorians ("I may or may not be related to some of them," said Sabine voice actor Tiya Sircar), not to mention a resurgent, out-for-himself Darth Maul trying to lure Ezra to the Dark Side, and you've got a very exciting era in the *Star Wars* galaxy. As for the question of whether Ahsoka Tano survived her season two finale scrap with Darth Vader? "I'm not going to say exactly, but you might not have seen the end of Ahsoka," teased Filoni. 🗡️

Rogue One opens on 16 December.
Star Wars Rebels season three will air on Disney XD this autumn.

THE OTHER MOVIES

The final big panel of the weekend was a masterclass in keeping people entertained without actually revealing much information about 2017's *Episode VIII* and 2018's *Han Solo* standalone movie.

So what have we learned? Well, we didn't get a title for *Episode VIII*, though its director, Rian Johnson, did reveal that he played a Stormtrooper in *Rogue One*, and that his movie will pick up immediately after *The Force Awakens*. (Though we kind of already knew that because of clues the cast had let slip.)



The new Han Solo.

It was also confirmed (officially) that the man granted the challenging task of playing the young Han Solo will be Alden Ehrenreich. Though we already knew that too because it was such a badly kept secret that pretty much the whole world was treating it as fact anyway. So aside from the info that Ehrenreich did screentests on the Millennium Falcon – and with Chewbacca – we didn't actually learn much at all. But sometimes it's as much about the journey as the destination. Right?

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REMEMBERED



Splinter Of The Mind's Eye



It was the big-screen *Star Wars* sequel we never saw – and the big bang of the Expanded Universe. Oliver Pfeiffer takes a trip to the strange, lost world of Mimban



B

Back in 1977, when the Force first awoke and the extraordinary spectacle of *Star Wars* erupted onto the big screen, audiences were understandably hungry for more adventures. However, it would be a long three years before they were finally reunited with their Empire-battling heroes – a gap unthinkable in our current age of seemingly relentless franchise expansions. Fortunately *Splinter Of The Mind's Eye*, an original spin-off novel by Alan Dean Foster, tantalisingly offered “the next adventures of Luke Skywalker”. And despite being a low-budget contingency plan for George Lucas should his intergalactic opera not become sufficiently successful, it's a story that offers an intriguing insight into the *Star Wars* sequel that nearly was.

“I was called to the office of Lucas's lawyer and questioned about my work,” says Alan Dean Foster, whose similarly toned 1974 sci-fi novel *Icerigger* was pivotal in attracting the attention of Lucas. “Following the interview, I met with George at ILM. We got along well, and that was it.”

Having seen Ralph McQuarrie's pre-production art, and ghostwritten the first *Star Wars* tie-in novelisation for Lucas in 1976, Foster was more than equipped to tackle the task of expanding the *Star Wars* universe. “There was no basic story in place; only the caveat that it should take place sometime after the events in the first film,” he tells *SFX*. “I was given complete creative freedom, and asked to write the book so that, if it proved necessary, it could be filmed on a low budget. That's why I set it on a fog-shrouded planet and had numerous scenes take place underground – the setting and fight sequences would have been correspondingly restricted.”

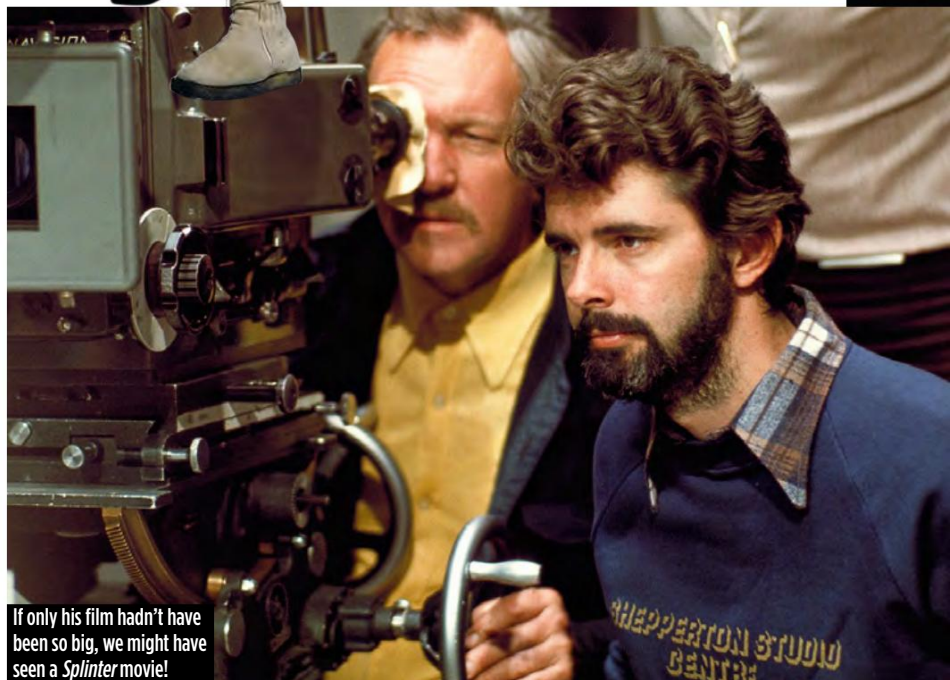
Published in 1978 and set shortly after events depicted in *A New Hope*, *Splinter* finds Luke and Leia crash-land on the secret Imperial mining planet of Mimban. Wanted by the Empire for their participation in the destruction of the Death Star, they conceal their identities by posing as miners. Soon they meet an eccentric Force-sensitive old crone named Halla, who tells them about an ancient and →



Did anyone here guess they were brother and sister?



Ralph McQuarrie concept art showing Vader and Skywalker duelling.



If only his film hadn't have been so big, we might have seen a *Splinter* movie!

powerful crystal capable of such overwhelming control over the Force that in the wrong hands it could be a tool of destruction. As our heroes track down the gem, Darth Vader is alerted to their presence and the potential power of the Kaiburr crystal...

"I was interested in exploring what one could do with the Force and how it might be manipulated," Foster explains. "I always liked the thought of there being some inanimate object that could somehow magnify the Force. The title was mine – Splinter being a fragment of the Kaiburr crystal, which allows for magnification of the Force, hence Mind's Eye."

While robotic companions R2-D2 and C-3PO are present, a certain world-weary, wisecracking smuggler is noticeably not. "I couldn't use Han Solo because, as I recall it, Harrison Ford hadn't yet signed on for any film sequels. So I was asked to leave him out of the book."

However, the character of Halla would appear to fill some of the void left by the space pirate, even though her mastery over the Force is curious and her motives for acquiring the crystal for herself questionable. "Halla was one of those free agents whose motivations one is never entirely sure about, not unlike Solo," Foster considers. "I always thought Halla and Solo would get along quite well. Since Solo was not available to use, I needed someone to fill in for him without being a direct replica."

More controversial, however, is the unspoken but highly suggestive romantic attraction between Luke and Leia that resonates throughout the story. Prose like "whenever he looked at her, the other caused emotions to boil within him like soup too long on the fire," are naturally provocative given the knowledge of future character developments.

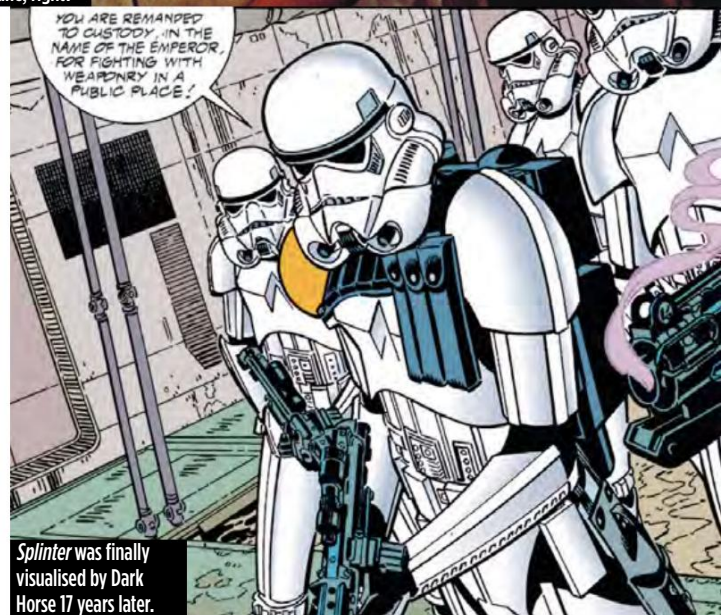
"I completed *Splinter* before the first film had even been released," Foster reiterates. "There was little guidance... George was somewhat busy with the matter of the film itself, and *Splinter* was an ancillary project. And there was that kiss between them in [A New Hope]. I had no indication they were related. It's always easy to analyse things in retrospect."

The novel's timing helps to explain the foreign nature of a lightsaber-wielding Princess Leia or a Luke Skywalker who holds his own during a first duel with Darth Vader and who enigmatically proclaims: "I'm Ben Kenobi!" and "Ben Kenobi is with me...". Some of these discrepancies can even be read as foreshadowing details clarified in future episodes. Obi-Wan warning Luke that he can no longer intervene if he chooses to confront Vader (again?) in *Empire* may explain Luke's special connection with the Jedi master, or the surprise revelation that Leia has a unique relationship with the Force in *Return Of The Jedi* may justify her ease with a lightsaber.

There's also a reference to an off-screen event that was largely left to the imagination in



"So these are the roles that'll give us life-long fame and fortune, right?"



Solo Acts Bringing Han to book

They may have been absent from *Splinter*, but thanks to Brian Daley's trilogy of spin-off novels published in 1979 (but set before *A New Hope*), Han Solo and Chewbacca had their own misadventures. These included *Han Solo At Star's End*, *Han Solo's Revenge* and *Han Solo And The Lost Legacy*, which culminates with the duo planning to borrow funds from Jabba the Hutt for a Kessel Run, laying the foundations for Han's ill-fated relations with the slimy gangster in *A New Hope*.



A New Hope: Leia's encounter with the Imperial interrogation droid on the Death Star. In *Splinter* the event continues to haunt Leia on a profound psychological level, one which Vader uses to taunt her. Luke, on the other hand, is still tormented by the deaths of Aunt Beru and Uncle Owen on Tatooine, and by the untimely demise of his mentor, Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Leia remains a strong heroine, not to mention a competent fighter pilot (she flies a Y-wing at the beginning of the novel, and during a dogfight sequence that was later cut from Foster's story due to forecasted budgetary constraints), Luke has evolved from impatient apprentice to assertive and skilled lightsaber fighter. And Vader is even more tyrannical, channelling his dark side into a relentless pursuit of the people responsible for the Death Star's destruction.

Crucially, the unmistakable feel and flavour of *Star Wars* is maintained, including an assortment of eccentric alien

“There was little guidance. I had no indication that Luke and Leia were related”

to see their prose visualised. “But *Star Wars* was George’s playground, his bat and ball, and his rules.”

However, if you choose to look closely, the shadow of *Splinter* appears to loom large over the sequel. Aesthetically speaking the forest-swamp world of Mimban resembles the Dagobah system crossed with the forest moon of Endor, while *Empire*’s climactic Cloud City duel echoes *Splinter*’s similarly described fight in terms of tactics – Vader at one point uses the Force to lob inanimate objects at Luke, and similarly acknowledges that Obi-Wan trained him well. Other details anticipate familiar tropes, like an Imperial commander coloured by his incompetence and deadly creature creations that recall such nasties as Jabba the Hutt’s dreaded Rancor from *Return Of The Jedi* and even the runaway razor-teethed and tentacled Rathtars Rey, Finn and co have to contend with onboard Solo’s freighter in *The Force Awakens*.

Visions Of The Mind’s Eye

Splinter – the comic book

In 1995 *Splinter Of The Mind’s Eye* was adapted as a four-part comic book series by Dark Horse Comics, which brought the alternative sequel to vivid life. Although generally faithful to Foster’s original novel, there were some minor alternations made. A scene where Leia had originally seen the Stormtroopers carrying their helmets was altered – at the insistence of Lucasfilm – to depict them wearing them. Could their subsequent clone origins depicted in the movie prequels be the reason for abruptly concealing their appearance?

But what if *Star Wars* had been a mere modest success, allowing *Splinter* to reach the screen? If the Kaiburr crystal played a significant part in the saga, how might this have influenced the direction of the *Star Wars* mythology? Perhaps *A New Hope* and *Splinter Of The Mind’s Eye* would now be remembered with the same nostalgic fondness as other modestly budgeted ’80s fantasy adventures like *The Dark Crystal* and *Willow*, the latter of which was based on a George Lucas story.

“It was a much more visually intimate *Star Wars* story and I thought it would have made a nice small film that would’ve sat neatly between *Episodes IV* and *V*,” Foster considers. Indeed, by bridging the narrative gap, what *Splinter* (the first Expanded Universe novel) gives us now is an alternative insight into what Luke and Leia may have been doing between *A New Hope* and *Empire*.

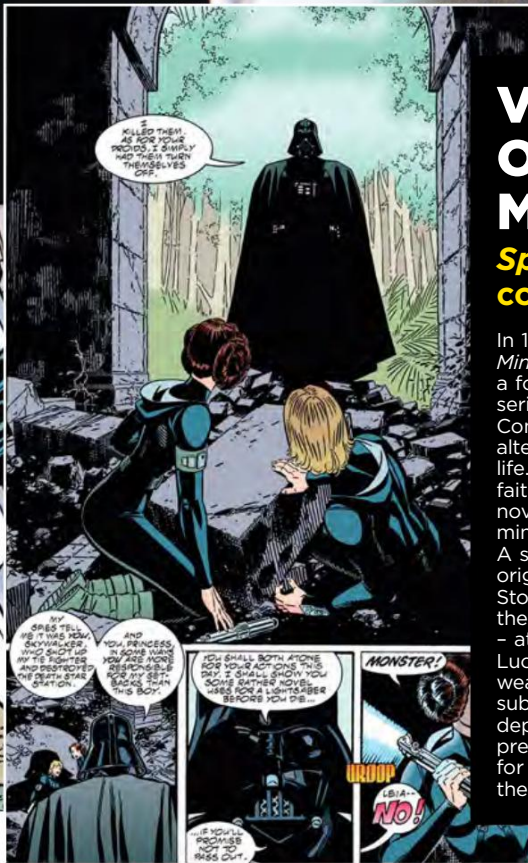
Although Foster would go on to create the story for 1979’s *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, this wouldn’t be the author’s final association with the *Star Wars* universe. In 2002 he penned *The Approaching Storm*, a book that describes plot advances prior to *Attack Of The Clones*. Most recently Foster wrote the novelisation to *The Force Awakens*, arguably one of the most anticipated saga continuations ever made, where he provided some enticing elaboration on key events left (frustratingly, for some) enigmatic in the movie. “It posed the usual challenges: expand on the action, the background, try to do something with the science, and most importantly, show what the characters are thinking... which you can’t really do very much in a two-hour film,” the author reflects.

In the end *Splinter Of The Mind’s Eye* will always remain a fascinating insight into a cinematic path not taken, one that would have given us a very different history of that galaxy far, far away... ●

allies and a detestable Imperial captain. There are also action scenes that keep within the context of the saga, including a thrillingly described underground Imperial attack and the aforementioned climactic lightsaber duel.

Ultimately, *Splinter Of The Mind’s Eye* the movie wasn’t to be. *Star Wars* broke all box office records following its premiere on 25 May 1977, and the proposed low-budget sequel that was to be confined to one planet evolved into *The Empire Strikes Back* – an epic, globe-trotting, mega-budgeted saga extension that still remains the definitive *Star Wars* follow-up, due in part to its riveting battle sequences, emotionally driven storyline and jaw-dropping climactic revelation.

“Of course I was disappointed,” reflects Foster on *Splinter* not being adapted. “Every author would like



Brought



To Book

LUKE RHINEHART

Another throw. The author of cult classic *The Dice Man* is back

Words by Jonathan Wright // Photography by Peter van Agtmael

Six or seven years ago, Luke Rhinehart thought he was done with writing. Then, a little to his own surprise, a new idea began to coalesce. Having toyed with the idea of writing a non-fiction book called *The Lies We Live By*, the author of cult classic *The Dice Man* (of which more later) realised he could better tackle the theme of “living with illusions that are not helpful” within the pages of a novel.

The result is *Invasion*, a comic tale of what happens when super-intelligent, shape-shifting, fun-loving furry aliens, FFs, arrive on our planet. “They don’t want to conquer, they don’t want to observe, they just want to hang out with this new planet,” says Rhinehart down the line from his home in New York State. Sound like great houseguests, what could possibly go wrong?

From the perspective of those in power, plenty. Because the FFs “have no biases” and “see human beings and their modern civilisation as a cancer”, they begin playing games to help us see where we’re going wrong. “Their games undermine all the established institutions of modern society: banks, corporations, government spy agencies, the military, politicians,” says Rhinehart.

While *Invasion* was written long before Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump began their tilts at the presidency, it’s a book that seems to reflect anti-establishment sentiments out in the wider world. But perhaps any new Luke Rhinehart would seem apposite at the moment.

To understand why, we need to go back to the 1960s. Back then, Rhinehart, aka George Cockcroft, was an academic who wrote occasionally in his spare time. By his early thirties, he’d written just “four or five short stories and a dozen poems”. Then he began the book that led to a career change, *The Dice Man*, the tale of a bored psychiatrist (named, rather confusingly, Luke Rhinehart) who begins to make life decisions on the basis of throwing dice.

ROLLING THE DICE

After four years, he’d completed just 222 pages, but in 1969 a manuscript found its way to start-up publishers Talmy Franklin. “At the rate I was going, I might never have finished the book,” he says. “I’m not like most writers who are quite ambitious or start writing at a very young age.”

In 1971, *The Dice Man* was published. To date, it’s sold upwards of 2m copies. So why did it so connect? It’s perhaps because it’s in key respects a book about being in the moment, about (that theme again) letting go of illusions, and this captures people’s imaginations. “Decisions happen, and if you realise that decisions happen rather than there’s

some creature inside you that can make a decision or not, that lets life flow much more easily,” says Rhinehart.

It helps too that *The Dice Man* is funny, subversive and “very amoral” – so much so that one of Rhinehart’s aunts, after finishing the novel, threw it in the garbage. Conversely, says Rhinehart, “Most readers who like the book are never tempted to try some serious dicing, but they ‘get’ the book enough to feel much freer than before they read it.”

VARIOUS INFLUENCES

As to where *The Dice Man* sprang from stylistically, Rhinehart isn’t certain. “I’m not quite sure what influenced it,” he says. “One of my favourite books had been *Catch-22*, which was a very comic novel, but I also was a fan of Dostoyevsky so it’s strange.” Nevertheless, he highlights the “confessional style” of Dostoyevsky’s *Notes From Underground*, a proto-existentialist novella narrated by an embittered civil servant, and bleak even by the standards of “the least comic novelist in the history of the world”.

Maybe all of this makes more sense when Rhinehart also goes on to namecheck Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, one of the wellsprings of American comic fiction, for its colloquial style and because “[Huck]’s sort of foolish at times, but we like him anyway. I think the same is true of Luke.”

By this he means Luke Rhinehart the narrator of *The Dice Man* rather than his novelistic nom de plume, although narrator and author have much in common. In particular, both have a capacity for being contradictory, possibly even infuriating – rather like Huck and, from a very different angle, Dostoyevsky’s unnamed narrator. In 2013, the novelist wrote to 25 friends and relatives to announce that Luke Rhinehart was dead. Some didn’t believe him, but others thought the author had left this mortal coil.

So is his work essentially serious? Is he a prankster by nature? “I’m afraid I’m often guilty in my books of preaching seriously that we shouldn’t take anything seriously,” says Rhinehart. “I see the contradiction.” It’s there, he says, in the way he sometimes makes fun of his own characters in his books, adding, “The subject is why are most human beings unhappy and unfulfilled, but the message should always have a smile or laugh attached.”

In the work of Luke Rhinehart, subject, message and laughter recur, although not that often as, in keeping with his worldview, Rhinehart is hardly prolific. “I feel ambition is a form of western sickness, so I’m a pretty laid-back fellow,” he says. ●

Invasion is published by Titan Books on 6 September.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Novelist

Born

→ 15 November 1932

From

→ New York State

Greatest Hits

→ As well as *The Dice Man* and his other novels, Rhinehart has written several screenplays.

Random Fact

→ *The Dice Man* features in songs by, among others, The Cure, The Fall and Talk Talk. Richard D James, aka the Aphex Twin, sometimes uses “The Dice Man” as an alias.



© MAGNUM PHOTOS



“I’M GUILTY OF
PREACHING
SERIOUSLY
THAT WE
SHOULDN’T
TAKE ANYTHING
SERIOUSLY”

HEROES&INSPIRATIONS

DAVID ARNOLD

The soundtrack king talks about his creative influences with Nick Setchfield. “I’m inspired by people being brilliant...”

From *Stargate* to *Sherlock*, *Little Britain* to the global glare of the 2012 Olympics, David Arnold remains one of our premier soundtrack composers. He’s won an Emmy and a Grammy while a run of five Bond films – transitioning from Pierce Brosnan to Daniel Craig – saw him hailed as heir to his hero, the masterly John Barry.

Next month he returns to his score for *Independence Day*, reviving its flag-rippling melodies for a live performance at the Royal Albert Hall, in sync with the original movie. “It gives the film an extra lease of life,” he tells *SFX*. “It’s a different way of experiencing it, a different way of seeing it, a different way of hearing it. There’s a certain energy.”

We meet at his base in London’s Air Studios. He shows us how to make the perfect cup of tea (“Look, no milk scum!”), shares the anatomical secrets of the *Sherlock* theme – never underestimate the power of a ballpoint pen bouncing on the bridge of a mandolin – and reflects on the forces that have shaped his musical career.

“At one point I’m sitting there, Scott Walker’s singing a song I’ve written with Don Black, Don’s next to me, and it’s for a James Bond film. And I’m thinking, ‘It’s going alright for a boy from Luton...’”

JOHN BARRY

John Barry’s film scores sound like songs. I don’t think it’s a coincidence that a lot of them have had lyrics put to them. As difficult as they are to sing they’re extraordinarily melodic and incredibly infectious. I remember seeing *You Only Live Twice* at a very young age, projected on 16mm at a Christmas party, and noticing the colour of the sound as well as the melody, just the tone of it. Why would I be thinking about it like that at the age of eight? You don’t. But I remember thinking, “This is amazing, and therefore this film must be amazing as well.” What I liked about John’s writing was that there was a sense of yearning about it, a reaching out to something just beyond your fingertips. If only you could grab it somehow, everything would be okay, all of your questions would be answered. I actually became quite good friends with him. But we never talked about music. We talked a lot about food and drink. Did I show him the teabag trick? I don’t think he would have bothered with tea!

THE BLADE RUNNER SCORE

I thought *Blade Runner*, as a piece, was extraordinary, just the sound of it. You realise that the sound is actually really, really important – not just the notes that are written. I tend to get more excited by things that are non-traditional. It’s a sad truth but if you got 10 people from the street and you played them a piece of orchestral film music, usually the →

“I became quite good friends with John Barry. But we never talked about music”



Blade Runner: not just about the visuals.



Sean Connery gets with the birds in *You Only Live Twice*.

KOBAL (3), REX (1)



first thing they'll say is "Is it *Star Wars*?" They know that *Star Wars* is big and orchestral so everything else is probably *Star Wars*. The synths that Vangelis used – and the way that he used them – they're very idiosyncratic machines. They're unpredictable – but the predictable aspect of them is that they're unpredictable! Because it's electricity running through all these different circuits and valves they're all going to be burning and heating up at different rates, and it does change the way that it sounds. That's really exciting to me. If you play an E on a violin for four bars you know what it's going to sound like, but if you play an E on a Yamaha CS-80 for four bars there's a chance something weird is going to happen, and it's going to get your ear going.

HANS ZIMMER

It seems to be the requirement of film music now to be simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. This is what Hans Zimmer is so brilliant at, probably most famously on *Inception* – the big "Blam!" noise, which is now a part of everything, everywhere. I was here at Air Studios when he had like 24 trombones and 24 cellos and they're all playing at the same time, they're playing the same note... He creates this noise that you've never heard before. Sometimes that does the job of a thousand notes. If it's the right sound then sometimes simpler is better. He's great at creating these sounds that sit alongside an orchestra and become part of the same palette. And I think that's what we're used to now. In contemporary film scoring, certainly in Hollywood, our ears demand all those things at the same time.

DON BLACK

By the time I asked him to work with me he'd already won an Oscar. He'd written *Born Free*, *To Sir With Love*, *Thunderball*, *Diamonds Are Forever*, *The Man With The Golden Gun*. He'd written musicals with John Barry, he'd written *Sunset Boulevard* with Andrew Lloyd Webber... Don is one of the last true great lyricists who has a mastery of words. I don't think lyrics are just about telling a story. Don has a way of actually finding a word which might not look all that impressive on paper. When we were

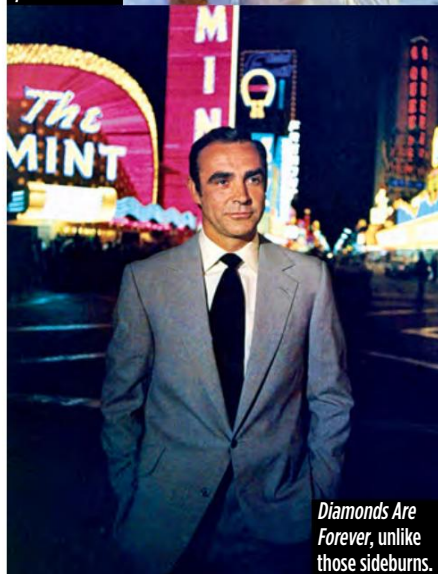
“Whenever I see a brilliant performance, I still want to be a part of that”



Leo BLAM gets his feet wet BLAM in *Inception* BLAM.



He charged a million a shot, you know.



Diamonds Are Forever, unlike those sideburns.

doing "Surrender" for *Tomorrow Never Dies* he sent some lines through and I thought, "Yeah, that's pretty good..." And then I sang them and all of a sudden I felt the shape of the words and the way that they stuck to the melody, the way that they came out of your mouth... You think, "Good god, this is incredibly satisfying to sing!" And then the whole thing really comes alive. It's quite extraordinary. It looks really simple, but like John Barry's work, it's really not simple. He has a way with the ordinary. An ordinary idea becomes extraordinary because it's stated in a certain way. Go back to "Born Free" – "Born free, as free as the wind blows, as free as the grass grows..." It's sort of simple, isn't it? But then you think well, that's it. That's everything that it needs to be. These things stab home, and they just land. It helps that he's possibly the nicest man in the universe.

SIR GEORGE MARTIN

I'm excited by the possibilities of sound with technology. George Martin was famous for his creation of odd sound effects and tape loops, slowing things down and speeding them up, playing things with different bows and hammers, flying things in backwards, tricking your ear into thinking something's happening. He had a total disregard for convention in terms of recording music, and in doing that he created the idea of the studio as an instrument.

KOBAL (3), REX (2), GETTY (1)

– possibly – his stuntman
in *Tomorrow Never Dies*.



ELVIS COSTELLO

☛ I've seen him loads of times. I love his lyrics, I love his singing, I love his playing. He's angry about things that I'd be angry about. I think there's a tradition in his songwriting. His dad was a singer and did cabaret standards and sang around the country – and my dad did the same. His songwriting feels like it's built on the same experience of songs that I knew. He came up through punk, in the look and the attitude, but then he would write a song like "Alison". I thought, "Something else is going on here – it's not like The Damned!" There was something much more musical and intelligent and forward thinking and inward looking going on. Here was someone who was a similar age to me, maybe a little older, who was taking all the great things about great songs but somehow making it for 16-year-olds rather than 45-year-olds. He was fashioning these songs that felt like they had their roots in the great American songbook but were completely contemporary and completely essential and relevant, with that incredibly distinctive voice as well.

BRILLIANCE

☛ I find the most inspiring thing is actually watching people being brilliant.

If I see a great comedian, I want to be a great comedian. If I see someone score a brilliant goal I want to be that footballer. I love to see a performer connect with an audience, with a song that you know has come to life through inspiration or perspiration. It might have only taken 20 minutes to write or it might have taken 20 years, and either way is fine.

Ultimately you know when these things are great. I remember when we did the John Barry memorial concert. It was a two and a half hour concert and every tune you knew, every tune was a stone cold classic. I went to see Burt Bacharach, same thing. He starts off with three songs in a medley. I think, "I know all of them, they're all massive. Why's he blowing it all in the first three minutes?" Then you realise you know the next one, too, and the one after that... You come out at the end either wanting to give up or get better. I always think I want to try harder. I want to get better. So whenever I hear a brilliant record or see a brilliant performance, I still want to be a part of that. That's why I like films – I was in the audience and I went wow. That opens something up in you. You think, "I want to be a part of the thing that makes you go wow." ●

Independence Day Live is at the Royal Albert Hall on 22 September.
<http://bit.ly/sfxindependence>



Sir George Martin and some group he worked with.

SCOTT WALKER

☛ I worked with him on "Only Myself To Blame" [unused end titles song for *The World Is Not Enough*]. I think it might be my favourite Bond thing I've written. His voice is so rich and so expressive and so unique and so powerful. I think people respond to a powerful voice. Like Shirley Bassey, the big note at the end of the songs. That's kind of what you're there for. It's almost like watching a footballer score a brilliant goal – it's happening in front of you. Tom Jones is the same. Pavarotti. They hit the big note and you know they're doing something quite brilliant in front of you. Scott had a way of delivering a song which made its way into the core of you. When he sang Jacques Brel they were sad songs, songs that were difficult to listen to – you had to really consider them and you had to let them in. His work is becoming more and more internal, going into the things that are important to him, moving beyond just notes and words. They've become more of a pure art thing, rather than what you might casually call a record. People know he's for real, and no matter how avant garde or strange it might be you know it's absolutely genuine and absolutely heartfelt. There's a man who's doing it regardless of whether he sells one or a billion. The only thing that matters to him is the work. When you have that sort of purity you know it's not fraudulent. There's no hiding from the truthfulness of it.



Burt Bacharach, a fella with a CV better than yours.

All-round great Elvis Costello.

BURNING QUESTIONS

Robin Hardy, director of unforgettable folk horror *The Wicker Man*, passed away last month. An unpublished interview by Alan Barnes celebrates the man and his masterpiece

Twenty-one years ago, I interviewed the sometime film director Robin Hardy in the dining room of a moderately swanky Soho members club. I say “sometime” because he was keen to stress “I’m also a journalist, I write quite a lot for the *New York Times*, I write novels... I don’t think I would want simply to direct movies, although I like directing movies.”

“You want a long epitaph on your gravestone?” I responded, toadyishly. “Not just ‘Director of *The Wicker Man*’?”

“That’s right!” he laughed.

Robin Hardy, director of *The Wicker Man*, died on 1 July, aged 86.

That’s not meant unkindly. To have directed – in fact, co-created – a film as enduring as *The Wicker Man* is an extraordinary thing, because *The Wicker Man* itself is an extraordinary thing. A horror film, certainly; perhaps the last great film of the Hammer horror era, containing the late Christopher Lee’s finest screen performance, as Lord Summerisle. It’s the defining work of the “folk horror” genre, too – its influence tangible in films such as Ben Wheatley’s *Kill List* (2011), and just recently Chris Hopewell’s video for Radiohead’s “Burn The Witch” (2016). It’s an intricate, satisfying picture, its fiery conclusion retaining all of its original power, however many times you’ve seen it.

When I met with Hardy, I was working for Marvel UK’s *Hammer Horror* magazine – but the company was taken over shortly after we’d met. Its new owners closed us down, and so I never got around to transcribing the tape... until now.

Back in 1995, Hardy was surprised to still be talking about a film he’d made 22 years earlier, in 1972. “What amazes me is that it keeps on coming back... I think it’s because it is sort of indefinable that it’s stayed in the repertoire as long as it has. It is a kind of timeless film, it doesn’t date very much. It was out of time and space in the story. Particularly with an American audience, where this is something that happens in funny little Europe, it’s completely timeless.”



ROBIN HARDY
1929–2016

The Wicker Man begins with the arrival of strait-laced mainland police sergeant Neil Howie (Edward Woodward) on a remote Scottish isle, there to question its isolated, inbred community about the alleged disappearance of a local girl. Summerisle looks very much like the quasi-medieval, middle-Europe rural backwater into which unlucky travellers blunder in the typical Hammer horror picture. When Howie first enters the Green Man inn, his arrival kills the locals’ rhubarbing dead; he takes a room from the landlord (Lindsay Kemp), and is introduced to his startlingly Scandinavian-looking daughter (Britt Ekland, every inch the typical Hammer beauty). But perhaps that’s not so surprising, since both Hardy and *Wicker Man* scriptwriter Anthony Shaffer “were very familiar with, and fans of, the Hammer horror pictures. But we thought that it’d be interesting to go back to the semi-mythological but nonetheless historical origins of all of those rules that the Hammer film writers and producers had set themselves. They were going to [*Dracula* author] Bram Stoker or whoever for their stories and what sold, they went on making – you know, ‘Don’t let’s do anything too original!’

“But because both Tony and I had some interest in history and mythology and religion too, we thought it’d be interesting to try and create, or recreate, in a semi-joke form of way, the world from which all these sort of customs and rituals and so on came from.” A pre-Christian world: “The Druids, the Romans, everyone in Western Europe had a →





THE UNKINDEST CUTS

How *The Wicker Man* was slain

Notoriously, Hardy's original cut of *The Wicker Man* was drastically shortened by order of British Lion's incoming management – in order to undermine producer Peter Snell, Hardy believed. “They buried me as a director, because they said my film was unshowable. They said, ‘Who would want to see this picture? It’s weird. What’s it about? We don’t understand what it’s about.’ And nor did they – they had no idea what it was about. They then thought, ‘Well, if we make it shorter, it must be better shorter than if it were its present length...’ The film lost its opening mainland scenes, plus essential sequences such as Lord Summerisle’s introduction, in which he sends a local boy to be sexually initiated by Britt Ekland’s Willow. Fortunately, the film is today available to view in two other versions – as a restored 99-minute Director’s Cut and latterly an intermediary “Final Cut”.



propitiating religion where you offered up something to the gods, to make sure that things went right, or didn’t go wrong.” Howie is shocked to discover schoolteacher Miss Rose describing a maypole to her pupils as “the image of the penis”, among other blasphemies.

HUMOROUS HORROR

The schoolroom scene, like much of the film, is outrageously funny. “A lot of it’s intentionally funny,” agreed Hardy, “but I don’t think there’s any rule.” Hardy faced huge difficulties getting original producers British Lion to release his film at all: “This is what puzzled the sales people here, you see – horror films are supposed to be horror films. You’re not supposed to laugh in a horror film. You’re not supposed to be romantic in a horror film. You’re not supposed to have beautiful scenery in a horror film...” Mimicking the closed-minded, he continued: “I mean, what is all this about? And what’s all this discussion about religion and things like that? Let’s go on and on with driving a stake through somebody’s heart. Why’s there no blood? Huh!” he snorted. “I think a lot of people have been more frightened by *The Wicker Man* than they were ever frightened by a Hammer horror film.”



Edward Woodward, Christopher Lee, Robin Hardy and a piece of fruit.

“ I WAS MOBBED BY A GROUP OF FURIOUS PAGANS SWATHED IN LEATHER AND CHAINS ”

Shooting the film in the autumn of 1972.



So he would have classified *The Wicker Man* as a horror film, then? “If I had to, I would,” he concurred, sounding a little pained, “but I do think there is a genre, which I think the French would call film fantastique. And a film fantastique can be funny or it can be horrifying or it can be both, but it is an attenuated fantasy. Not entirely without, in this case, some cerebral content, one hopes. I don’t think it’s a horror film, because people who go to see horror films expecting a certain kind of picture

are disappointed, and therefore to give them this label, it’s almost to mislabel it.”

Ultimately, Howie learns that he’s been lured to the island to become the perfect May Day sacrifice – and ends up immolated inside a willow idol, to appease the gods of the harvest. Like Shaffer’s play *Sleuth* (1970), *The Wicker Man*’s plot is an elaborate game – played on Howie and the audience alike. “It’s a quest, and it’s a game; and the game for the audience is to guess, from all the clues that they’re given – which are endless, all the way through the film – as to what kind of society [Howie’s] in, what the end for him will be. It doesn’t cheat on that basis; it’s all there. But it would be fruitless to think that the average audience could be expected to bone up on [old folk-history anthology] *The Golden Bough* before they go to see *The Wicker Man* in order to get all the clues...”

The ending is open to interpretation. Is it a near-heroic demise for the devout Howie, since

KOBAL (4)



Remarkably, Christopher Lee appeared in the film for no fee!

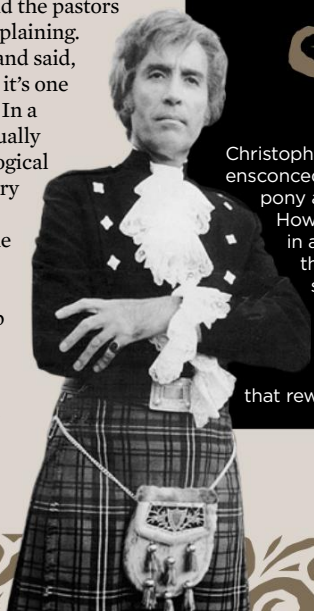


(as Summerisle himself says) he dies “a martyr’s death”? Or will the Summerislenders indeed reap a fine harvest come the autumn? Or, nihilistically, does it suggest that both worldviews are equally deluded? Hardy wasn’t letting on. “In a way, ‘You pays your money, you takes your choice.’ The film is perfectly okay as far as Christianity is concerned, because you can well accept that [Howie] gets his reward in heaven.” That was partly the line that Hardy took while touring America to promote the film: “In the Bible Belt, where we gave a special screening for the reverends and the pastors and the priests, I did a little explaining. They all went to their pulpits and said, ‘You must go and see this film, it’s one of the true Christian pictures.’ In a sense, it’s perfectly true. It actually deals with an important theological point.” The movie elicited a very different reaction in San Francisco, however. Exiting the Castro Theater on its opening night, Hardy remembered: “I was almost mobbed by a group of pagans swathed in leather and chains and things, who were furious, and said, ‘You’re giving paganism a bad name!’”

At this, Hardy chuckled till he choked. “I didn’t allow for the fact that of course with a lot of audiences – not only in America, but certainly here, too – the tongue-in-cheek part of the movie would pass right over people’s heads. I get a lot of people who enjoy the movie of whom that’s true...” he sighed.

As our meeting ended, Hardy confided that he’d heard whispers that moves were afoot to remake the film. “I don’t quite understand why

they’d remake it,” he said, clearly mystified. “Bizarre.” That remake appeared 11 years later, starring Nicolas Cage. “Bizarre” wasn’t the word for it. Five years after that, Hardy made *The Wicker Tree*, his own “spiritual sequel”. The original’s fire burns no less brightly today, however. Most of those who made it are gone now – Hardy, Shaffer, Lee, Woodward, Ingrid Pitt... But on Summerisle, we know, “the old gods aren’t dead”. ●



COUNT SUMMERISLE?

“We’re a deeply religious people...”

Christopher Lee’s Lord Summerisle isn’t unlike his Count Dracula – a charming aristocrat ensconced in a baronial hall removed from the village, which Howie reaches by means of pony and trap. (There are further suggestions of vampire lore elsewhere in the movie: Howie fashions a makeshift crucifix in a graveyard, for example, and later participates in a lamplit exhumation.) Casting Lee, insisted Hardy, was all part of the game: “He is there to anchor the audience’s hope that this is a horror film, [so] it’s going to have some recognisable landmark in it. And the fact that there’s jolly music in it and the people are all smiling and nice and have actual characters, and that there’s all this other stuff going on – nevertheless, there’s Christopher, it’s going to be all right! He’s either going to show fangs, or something is going to happen which is going to be familiar. And so when the wicker man happens... it’s okay, because there is that reward if you’re waiting to have a frisson of shock at the end of the picture.”

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CINEMA

STAR TREK BEYOND

More power to your Elba



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

12A | 122 minutes

► Director **Justin Lin**

► Cast **Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana, Anton Yelchin, Karl Urban, Simon Pegg, Idris Elba, Sofia Boutella**

❖ When *Star Trek Beyond*'s first trailer was released, there were howls of outrage from certain quarters at how action-centric it was. "Wait and see," others advised, "There's bound to be more to it." Very sensible. And there is. But not a great deal more. One suspects that ultimately what people will remember will be broadly the same things which leapt out in that concentrated one-and-a-half-minute burst. Like that ruddy motorbike.

Not that there's anything wrong with *Star Trek* doing action. The view that *Trek* is fundamentally philosophical is to some degree exaggerated, a fan myth partially fostered in the '70s by creator Gene Roddenberry, who was happy to see himself placed on a pedestal as a visionary thinker. Fact is, action's been a key component from the moment Kirk ripped his first tunic. But it's vital to embed that action within a compelling narrative.

Undeniably, *Fast & Furious* veteran Justin Lin has moulded some impressive sequences here – beginning with extended destruction-porn, as the Enterprise is shredded by a swarm of thorn-like alien craft which bombard it kamikaze-style. Every time you think the ship can't take any more of a battering, some fresh indignity is visited upon it. When the wreckage comes to rest you half expect a giant foot to give it one final stamp. The sheer brutality is breathtaking.

With our heroes stranded on a remote planet, reliant on their survival skills, the action continues, with similarly shipwrecked scavenger Jaylah (Sofia Boutella) kicking ass, and Kirk doing diversionary motorbike leaps to help spring his crew from chokey, and a thrilling fight high above the streets of Federation starbase Yorktown (whose impossibly twisty-turny geography recalls both *Inception* and *Spaghetti Junction*). Much of all this is as dizzying as it is exciting, with both characters and viewers sent tumbling around as, say, the crew fight sneering reptilian villain Krall's forces in the corridors of a ship in freefall.



Beyond goes heavy on the action, lighter on the philosophy.

Scotty was really done with this game of Risk.



However, some of it's as difficult to swallow as the convenient discovery of a motorbike.

Co-writer Simon Pegg says the approach was basically Original Series Hulks out – "as if an episode had been injected with gamma radiation" – but at times it feels like the Enterprise crew have had a superhero-origin retcon, particularly the now seemingly invulnerable Kirk. After hours of incidents that should guarantee shattered bones and lacerations, the worst he has to show for it is a black eye. We even see him fly – kind of. Surely what we want

“Pairing up Spock and Bones is a particular delight”

from our very human captain is regular heroics, not superheroics?

Idris Elba's Krall is the point around which the script's more substantial elements coalesce. The idea, apparently, was to embody



the violent separatism we see in the headlines, creating a figure who underlines the Federation's collectivism by standing in stark opposition to it. Sadly that doesn't come across clearly. Krall seems more like a disgruntled avenger, out to get his own back on the Federation – which after Nero and Khan feels rather old hat. There's a good film to be made about “the Frontier pushing back” – perhaps by questioning if the Federation is a colonialist power – but this isn't it. And the character's Big Twist leaves your mind spinning with unanswered questions. Once again,

this franchise seems too eager to move on to the next stunt – to shrug, “Pfft, maybe we'll explain it in a prequel comic one day.”

Where the film triumphs is in the way it nails the basic character dynamics. Pairing up Spock and Bones is a particular delight, affording us the chance to see the Vulcan crack a smile and handing Karl Urban a quiver-full of zingers. But elsewhere the film struggles to find absorbing character arcs. In Kirk's case we're told that he's been ground-down by the routine of exploration... granted, this is the Kelvin timeline version, but the

notion of James T suffering such ennui seems so alien to his nature that we're not buying it.

The result is a film which, though less likely to infuriate than its predecessor, also proves less interesting. *Into Darkness's* recycling of Khan was something you could debate for days. For all its mass-appeal pleasures, *Beyond* is a movie that begins to mentally recede from view the moment the taste of popcorn fades from the tongue. **Ian Berriman**

i Sulu's partner (named Ben) is played by co-writer Doug Jung, after the original actor dropped out the day before filming.

EASTER EGGS

SPOILER WARNING!

Our favourite Original Series references

LOGGING IN

In Kirk's opening Captain's Log, he mentions that it's the 966th day of the Enterprise's five-year mission. *Star Trek* first aired in September 1966 – that's 9/66.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Star Trek IV featured a USS Yorktown. More significantly, when Gene Roddenberry first pitched *Star Trek* to NBC in 1964, Yorktown was originally going to be the name of the ship.



PEACH OF A SPEECH

Kirk's “There's no such thing as the unknown” speech as the Enterprise heads into the nebula is a word-for-word pinch from 1966 episode “The Corbomite Maneuver”.

NIMOY'S NUMBER

The registry number of the Franklin – NX-326 – is another little tribute to the late Leonard Nimoy. The actor's birthday was 26 March – 3/26 in US date order.

HO HO HO, GREEN GIANT

Scotty mentions a theory that the USS Franklin fell foul of a “giant green space hand”. That's exactly what the Enterprise encountered in the classic episode “Who Mourns For Adonais?”



CINEMA



The Women's Institute immediately realised the room had been double-booked.

SUICIDE SQUAD

Bad company

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

15 | 123 minutes

► Director David Ayer

► Cast Will Smith, Margot Robbie, Jared Leto, Joel Kinnaman, Viola Davis

❗ **Suicide Squad is faced with a task that probably even the hardest, craziest or most brutal members of the titular supervillain team would think twice about taking on.** It has to reassure fans of DC comic book movies that their universe can be just as creatively fun as the competition, while at the same time juggling an ensemble that's packed more densely than a tube carriage at rush hour.

Fortunately, in David Ayer (*End Of Watch*, *Fury*) it has someone with passion and anarchic humour

to go with the style. Acting as both writer and director here, he's largely able to wrangle together Hollywood heavyweights such as Will Smith, rising stars including Margot Robbie and Joel Kinnaman, and an assorted batch of lunatics, badasses and beasts, without any of them dominating so completely that it feels uneven. Smith's Deadshot, Robbie's Harley Quinn, and to a lesser degree, Jared Leto's pimped-out version of

“Definitely a step in the right direction”

the Joker take some of the focus, but there's enough material to go around, with a particularly tough performance from Viola Davis as the government official who brings them together.

Compared to the growling, grimacing world of *Batman V Superman*, *Suicide Squad* at least lets the bad guys be colourful and entertaining, with Robbie a giggly delight and Smith more engaged and quippy than he's been for a while. Ayer also lets the soundtrack do some of the heavy lifting, with the musical accompaniment skipping between the likes of Queen, The Rolling Stones and Lil' Wayne with wild abandon: this is a director who understands how to put his mark on a movie.

What he can't do, however, is completely overcome some of the more annoying tropes of the genre. The early meet-the-team sequence, despite some enjoyable moments, feels like it could include Captain Exposition as part of the collective, with the line-up and the mission explained several times and every point hammered home. And when the gang finally hits the streets of Midway City to confront the big threat, it's just another CGI-heavy battle boasting a big glowing thing and an army of weird creatures that look like they've waltzed out of a '70s episode of *Doctor Who*.

Suicide Squad doesn't completely overcome the issues that the DC cinematic universe has experienced so far, then, but this is definitely a confident step in the right direction, and if future directors are allowed to take the gloves off things can only improve from here on out. **James White**

i Cara Delevingne (*Enchantress*) says that on Ayer's advice she ran naked through woods to prepare for her role. Chilly!



GHOSTBUSTERS

We ain't afraid of no girls

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

12A | 116 minutes

▶ Director Paul Feig

▶ Cast Kristen Wiig, Melissa McCarthy, Leslie Jones, Kate McKinnon, Chris Hemsworth, Andy Garcia

🔍 **In one scene in this otherwise** upbeat movie, Melissa McCarthy's Abby sadly observes, "People dump on us pretty much all of the time." Never a truer word spoken. But if you move aside all the fetid layers of "dump" that have been so publicly heaped on this project since its announcement, you can experience it for what it actually is: a fun, slick, occasionally even brilliant romp.

Rather like the new *Star Trek* movies, this is a film that feels familiar to its core, helped along by brief cameos from the original Ghostbusting team (although Bill Murray – whisper it – isn't quite firing on all cylinders, failing to engage with his co-stars in any meaningful way). But there's no denying that its cast of female comics have dragged the premise into the 21st century, ad-libbing vast spiels like all Hollywood comedies seem to do these days,

and (with the likes of Chris Hemsworth's ditzzy secretary) gleefully turning a few stereotypes on their head.

Sure, some gags fall flat, a few scenes could have done with tightening up in the edit, and occasionally you get the sense you're watching the cast do some clunky improv on stage. The villain's forgettable, and the plot, while not the same as the 1984 version, runs suspiciously parallel to it. All of this, however, is offset by the beautiful effects, inventive action and the fact that, while all the ladies are great, Kate McKinnon's Jillian is a force of nature. When that woman fights ghosts, you suspect Venkman, Stantz, Spengler and Zeddemore would watch with their jaws on the floor.

At one point, the girl-Ghostbusters read out a YouTube comment that says, "Ain't no bitches gonna hunt no ghosts." They treat this with the derision it deserves – as should you. Bustin' will make you feel good.

Jayne Nelson

i Look out for a nod to a line from the original: a Times Square billboard ad declares "That's a big" next to a Twinkie.



THE 9TH LIFE OF LOUIS DRAX

Coma Police

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 9 SEPTEMBER**

15 | 108 minutes

▶ Director Alexandre Aja

▶ Cast Jamie Dornan, Aiden Longworth, Sarah Gadon

🔍 **Much like *Pan's Labyrinth*,** this adaptation of a book by Liz Jensen uses fantasy as deception, masking what is a dark and adult film underneath childlike whimsy.

It follows, of course, Louis Drax (Aiden Longworth), a disturbed boy whose history of curious mishaps has led to him falling off a cliff during a family picnic. Or was he pushed? Either way, he lands in the fantastical world of a coma, where he makes friends with a sea creature, and attempts to take down his doctor (Jamie Dornan), who's become romantically involved with his mother Natalie (Sarah Gadon). Louis's father (Aaron Paul), meanwhile, has gone missing.

The mystery unravels with the pace of a dream, not only surreally bleeding between the worlds of reality and coma, but capturing adulthood as seen by a child. This works – mostly – thanks to director Alexandre Aja, who has a gift for hypnotic visuals and imaginative storytelling. But it's Longworth's performance as Drax that really sells it; he has the sort of cheek and charm that can power through even the most jarring of scenes. *The 9th Life* doesn't always click, but when it does it's fascinating. **Stephen Kelly**

i Filming a silent flashback of Louis's dad shouting at his mum, Aaron Paul yelled things like, "You have a nice smile!"



CELL

Phoning it in

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 26 AUGUST**

15 | 98 minutes

▶ Director Tod Williams

▶ Cast John Cusack, Samuel L. Jackson, Isabelle Fuhrman

🔍 **You know there's something** wrong with a film when you become obsessed with a hat.

In this adaptation of Stephen King's 2006 novel, a mysterious signal turns mobile users into homicidal, hive-mind "Phoners". At the height of civilisation's nosedive into chaos, John Cusack's hero takes time out to pull on a black beanie, then spends the rest of the movie randomly taking it on and off. A bit of prop "business"? Cold head? Covering up for an operation?

Who knows, but for much of the duration it's the most intriguing question here. *Cell* has its moments: the original outbreak is ferocious, and a sequence that involves torching a playing field full of sleeping Phoners is memorably bizarre. But the script repeatedly fails to adequately explain key plot elements, with frustratingly incoherent results. When they're not standing around open-mouthed, emitting strange static noises, the Phoners' twitchy choreography is often comical. And the idiocy of the central characters – who apparently never check to see if the internet still works, and who, on discovering that Phoners basically power down at dusk, fail to consider *only travelling at night* – is kinda infuriating. **Calvin Baxter**

i *Toxic Avenger* director Lloyd Kaufman has a cameo – he's in the airport sequence, wearing a Hawaiian shirt.

CINEMA



Your starter for one: identify Pete. Identify the dragon.

PETE'S DRAGON

How To Hug Your Dragon

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

PG | 103 minutes

▶ Director David Lowery

▶ Cast Oakes Fegley, Bryce Dallas

Howard, Karl Urban, Wes Bentley

◉ **Bearing only superficial** similarities to the jolly 1977 Disney musical of the same name (it contains a boy named Pete and, er, a dragon), this is an adorable romp with a great cast, pretty CGI, lush landscapes and enough sweetness to fill a beehive.

A cross between *How To Train Your Dragon* and Spike Jonze's *Where The Wild Things Are* (only this time aimed firmly at kids), it's the story of a sprog named Pete (an excellent Oakes Fegley) who finds himself stranded and alone in the forest after a car crash kills his parents. Saved from a pack of

wolves by a dog-like dragon he names Elliot, Pete goes on to live a happy life as a little mini-Tarzan alongside the green furry beast, up until evil loggers threaten his world and Park Ranger Grace (Bryce Dallas Howard) takes him home and reminds him of what a mum should be like.

At times a touch too scary for little kids – Elliot may be a *nice* dragon, but occasionally he's bloody menacing – this is a heartwarming family adventure that only suffers from two issues: a predictable plot and an absence of wit. What it lacks in one-liners, however, it makes up for in slapstick gags about dragon snot, so children won't mind all that much. **Jayne Nelson**

i The director celebrated wrapping on the New Zealand shoot by jumping off Kawarau Bridge, birthplace of bungee.

LIGHTS OUT

The Dark Power

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 19 AUGUST**

15 | 81 minutes

▶ Director David F Sandberg

▶ Cast Teresa Palmer, Maria Bello, Gabriel Bateman, Alexander DiPersia

◉ **The concept of something** nasty lurking in the darkness is a primal fear, and one that's been exploited by horror movies from the moment the genre was born. So it takes a brave filmmaking team to tackle a subject that's been explored almost to death. Fortunately, *Lights Out* benefits from the producing guidance of James Wan, no stranger to giving

“Stays hair-raising to the end”

old concepts a fresh breath of air. And talking of fresh, the man calling the shots is David S Sandberg, who parlayed some successful short films into a chance at something a little bigger, but had never directed a full-length feature before, let alone a big studio film.

Expanding Sandberg's most successful short, the script from *Final Destination 5*'s Eric Heisserer stitches a tale of a dysfunctional family and mental illness to a fantastic scary story that ranks among the year's best. Rebecca (Teresa Palmer) is an emotionally distant young woman who's grown up in the shadow of her mother Sophie's (Mario Bello) depression. That darkness included a mysterious creature called Diana who haunted Rebecca's days and nights. Now, as her stepbrother Martin (Gabriel Bateman) starts to



Darth Long Hair stalked into the arena.

see the same things, she realises Diana is a much more real threat than her mother's fragile mental state might indicate.

Sandberg's background as a jack-of-all-trades filmmaker means that while not every moment works, he still makes good use of practical locations and effects, knows how to stage an effective scare and ensures the

movie whips along with pace and panic, staying hair-raising to the end. It's a promising start for the director, and hopefully as his budgets increase, he'll maintain what makes *Lights Out* perform so efficiently as a fright-delivery system. **Jim Blakey**

i The director's wife and short film collaborator, Lotta Losten, cameos as Esther in the first scene.



KUBO AND THE TWO STRINGS

Japanese Boy

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 9 SEPTEMBER

PG | TBC

▶ Director Travis Knight

▶ Cast Art Parkinson, Charlize Theron, Matthew McConaughey, Ralph Fiennes

◆ **With *Kubo And The Two Strings***, stopmotion animation house Laika – the guys who brought us *Coraline*, *ParaNorman* and *The Boxtrolls* – have yet again proved that they're a force to be reckoned with. It's not hyperbole to say that this adorable adventure showcases some of the most beautiful model-making and stopmotion design ever committed to screen, with the kind of cinematography old-guard cameramen like Jack Cardiff would drool over. In fact, the models and animation here are so bloody good they make Pixar's CGI adventures look sterile in comparison. As if all that wasn't enough, *Kubo* also has a fantastic cast of characters, a script that never lags and a glorious score. Okay, we'll go out on a limb and

say it: this could well be the most perfect kids' movie ever made.

Set in Japan, it's the story of little Kubo (voiced by Art Parkinson) and his quest to find the magical armour owned by his late father, a Samurai knight who angered the Moon King (Ralph Fiennes), thus sending his family into exile. Helped on his journey by a monkey (Charlize Theron), a bewitched Samurai beetle (Matthew McConaughey) and lots of little origami creatures that don't say a word but have more personality than some living people you actually know, Kubo battles everything from undersea eye-monsters to giant, skeletal apes.

As a children's romp it's funny, colourful and has a lovely message (love is all you need). As a film for adults, it's gratifyingly rich, textured and psychological; there's a chance some moments might make your chin wobble. Don't miss it. **Jayne Nelson**

i Stick around during the end credits for a behind-the-scenes sequence showing the hours it took to film the skeleton-ape.



"I really fancy a banana right now."

400 DAYS

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 19 AUGUST

15 | 86 minutes

◆ **This derivative SF effort** is part *Moon*, part below-par *Twilight Zone* episode.

Brandon Routh leads a team of four astronauts undergoing a 400 day-long Earth-based simulation intended to ready them for space travel. But things go awry when they start hallucinating...

Clichéd characterisations and humdrum performances (there's a reason why *Superman Returns* didn't make Routh a breakout star) drag things down, and Matt Osterman's script can't reach the heights of its lofty influences. **Steve O'Brien**



The prison's security had one flaw.

ASTERIX: THE MANSIONS OF THE GODS

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 19 AUGUST

PG | 85 minutes

◆ **After live-action turkeys** starring Gérard Depardieu, it's a pleasure to see Goscinny and Uderzo's Gauls back in animated form. One of their more overtly satirical stories is recreated with much of its waspishness intact, the plot serving as a critique on gentrification. Jack Whitehall and Nick Frost lend vocals to an overly chatty dub that only marginally detracts from the boisterous 3D visuals. **Neil Smith**



It was the astronomers' dress-up day.

LEAGUE OF GODS

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** OUT NOW!

12A | 109 minutes

◆ **This Chinese fantasy** is a work of nonsense so insane that it's almost electrifying. Like a shark, it never stops, whooshing breathlessly from one confusing plot point to another. Somewhere in there there's god-like being Lei, who must find a precious golden sword. But there's also a talking plant with one eye, a guy who rides a panther, a fox-woman with nine tails and a six-armed baby who slaughters crab-people with his farts. It's clunky, it's terrible, it might be the best film ever made.

Stephen Kelly

ALSO+OUT



Four more films to fill you in on. **NINE LIVES** (19 August) sees Kevin Spacey's workaholic dad no doubt learning valuable life lessons after getting stuck in a cat's body. **THE PURGE: ELECTION YEAR** slipped back to 26 August after our review went to press last issue. We said: "the concept still has some entertainment value left" (★★★). **MORGAN** (2 September) sees *The Witch's* Anya Taylor-Joy playing a bio-engineered human. Also doing the rounds: a new restoration of **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH** (9 September), Nicolas Roeg's 1976 film starring David Bowie as a stranded alien.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR



Fight For Your Right To Parlay

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED 5 SEPTEMBER**

2016 | 12 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD/
download

► Directors Anthony Russo, Joe Russo
► Cast Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr.,
Scarlett Johansson, Sebastian Stan,
Anthony Mackie, Chadwick Boseman

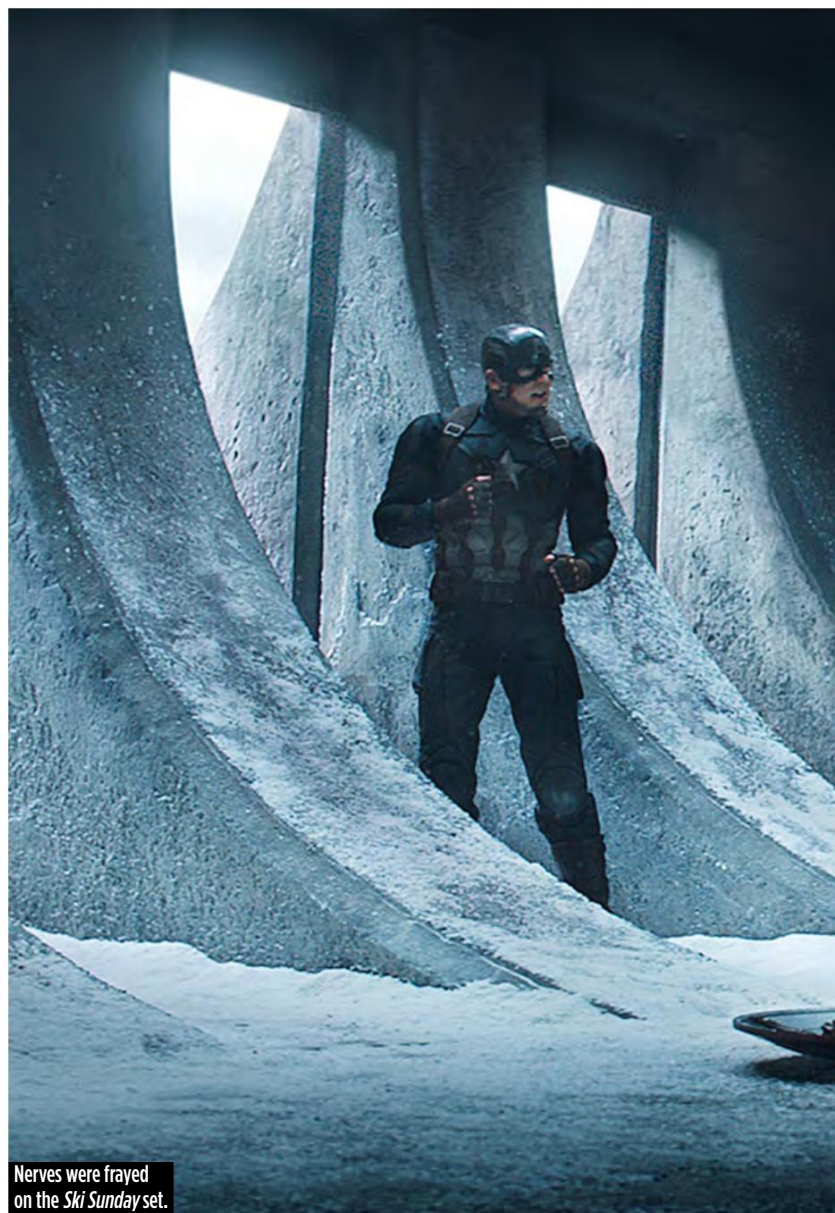
❖ **How difficult must it be to** orchestrate a massive super-powered rumble that has to service multiple characters, juggle (and move forward) several plotlines, introduce new people into the fray and still make a movie that doesn't keel over from the sheer weight of expectation and story? Well, just pulling off *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* gave Joss Whedon the professional equivalent of night terrors, so imagine the pressure on the Russo brothers going into *Civil War*. Yet they pull it off with style, aplomb and charm.

That's despite not having the fuse that set off the comic book version, as in the movies almost

everyone's identity is out in the open. In bringing the simmering tension between Robert Downey Jr.'s Tony Stark and Chris Evans' Steve Rogers to the boil, the idea that such staunch friends might disagree over how much government intervention the superheroes' actions need works just as well.

Despite the presence of Cap's name above the title, *Civil War* still offers Iron Man some worthy moments, allowing for the usually smug, arrogant Stark to dig deep and tap his inner angst like never before. The Star-Spangled Man isn't short-changed, though; Steve scores plenty of wondering about his place in the world (especially following the death of his emotional anchor, Peggy Carter) and a burning drive to save his old pal Bucky, even if said chum is now the brain-twisted Winter Soldier.

Civil War works so well because it remembers what makes all the characters tick even as it plunges them into conflict – even Paul



Nerves were frayed on the *Ski Sunday* set.



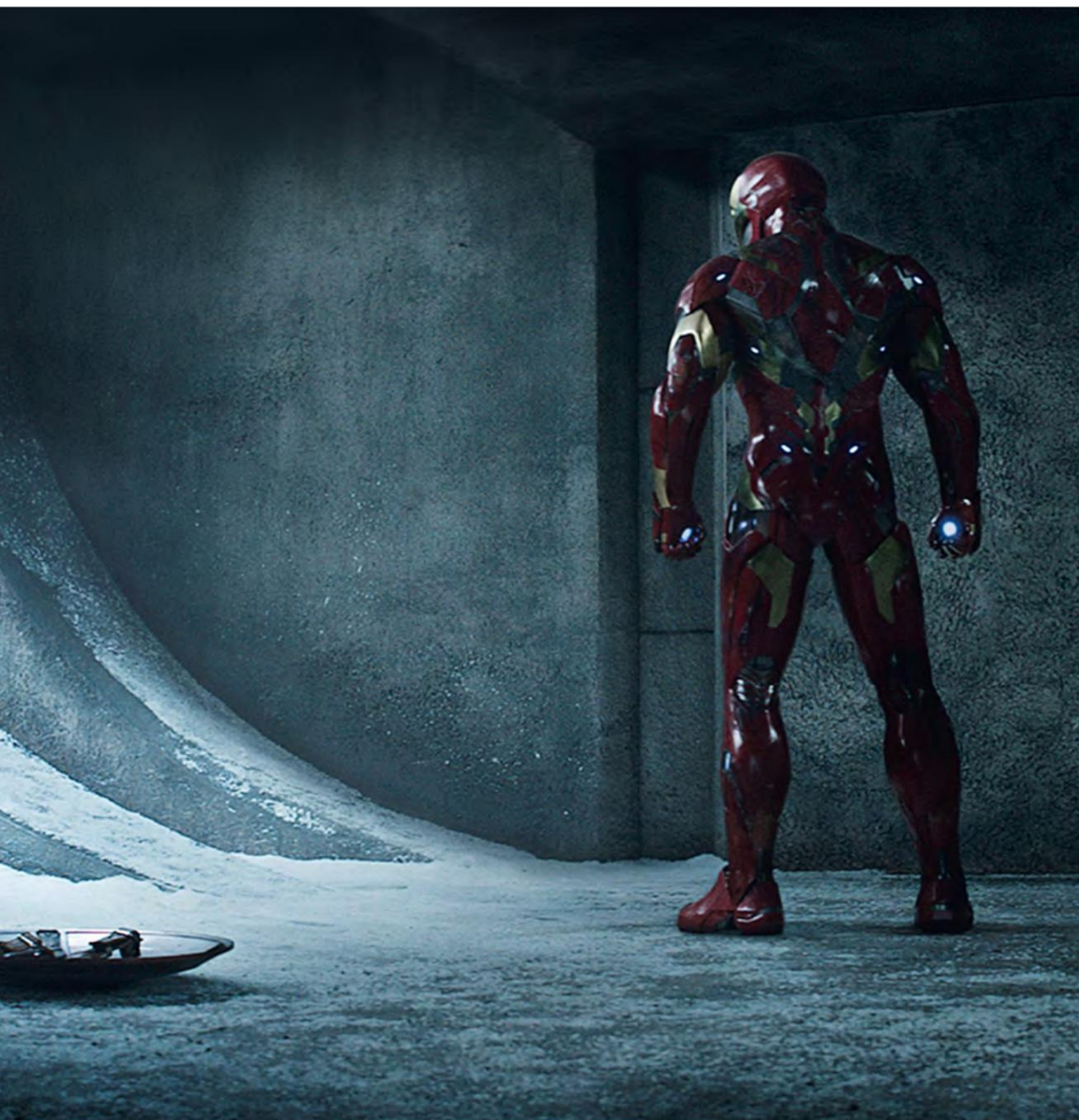
The wait for the airport transfer bus continued.

Rudd's Scott Lang/Ant-Man, who (while he only shows up briefly) is at full comedic power, particularly in the scene where he first meets Cap and co and dissolves into a bit of a fan among his heroes.

Then there are the newcomers. Tom Holland's Spider-Man, only used sparingly, instantly becomes one of the best on-screen portrayals of the webslinger, freed from yet another ponderous exploration of his backstory. This Peter Parker is truly young, joyful, quippy and skilled, while still maintaining his grounding as a nerd somewhat out of his depth.

“This thing pulses with movement and life”

Chadwick Boseman's T'Challa, meanwhile, the Wakandan warrior also known as Black Panther, is more of a coiled spring, intense and quietly fuming after his own tragedy, but more than willing to accept when he's wrong. The Panther's a great new addition to



DANIEL BRÜHL

Baron Zemo in
*Captain America:
Civil War*



Did *Civil War* feel on a different level to anything you've done before?

→ Yeah, it felt massive. Arriving on set I was shit-scared! It was like being a 12-year-old when you're sent to a new school, and you know it's going to be a big class. But I was welcomed in such a generous way – it didn't feel like I was the new kid. Instead, people really embraced me and were very generous. Even the reshoot was quite big – it was only a couple of days, but with that crew you'd shoot an entire film in Europe!

What was it like working with two directors?

→ It's interesting to figure out who's responsible for what. I would say Joe is always closer to the actors, and Anthony is sometimes the overview perspective. And there's always references where they had other films in mind. There was one sequence, and it really reminded me of something. Then Joe said, "There's this one moment in *The French Connection*..." I had the pleasure to work with Quentin Tarantino, who's a master in making these references, and it reminded me a bit of him.

Matt Maytum

the team, sparking a heart-stopping car chase scene that's edited like something out of a Paul Greengrass *Bourne* film.

Almost all the heroes receive useful arcs. One or two are short-changed, especially Paul Bettany's Vision – but then you can understand why you wouldn't want him in the fight too much given his power level, and even he has a great line in quiet humour (like his taste in sensible sweaters). *Civil War* occasionally feels overcrowded, but it doesn't drag the story down: this thing pulses with movement and life.

And the directors (along with writers Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely) have pulled off an even neater trick: finding a way to end a Marvel movie that doesn't require a massive FX overload (that setpiece is reserved for the airport fight). Instead it's a personal struggle, one born not out of an alien invasion or rampaging robots, but of real people with very deeply-felt issues. *Civil War* may not be perfect, but it's the best Marvel movie to date and shows that the team still *has it*. It had a lot to prove, and does so with ambition, passion and verve.

✚ **Extras** A pretty decent selection, featuring a commentary by all four of the writers and directors; "United We Stand, Divided We Fall", a Making Of in two parts; a pair of "The Road To Civil War" featurettes, looking at the evolution of the characters of Captain America and Iron Man; deleted and extended scenes; a gag reel; a sneak peek at the forthcoming, Benedict Cumberbatch-starring *Doctor Strange*. **James White**

i Chris Evans messed up his arm filming Cap holding back a helicopter; it gave him gyp for several weeks afterwards.

GETTY



The bus conductor was really terrifying.

DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

- The lights spookily flicker on and off.
- Someone plays, hums or sings The Clash's "Should I Stay Or Should I Go".
- Eleven has a nosebleed after using her powers.
- A couple of teenagers snog.
- Someone namechecks *Dungeons & Dragons*.
- People are waving torches around, Mulder and Scully-style.
- You see the Coca-Cola logo so clearly that it seems suspiciously like product placement.

STRANGER THINGS

Back In Time

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | Available to stream

▶ Creators *The Duffer Brothers*

▶ Cast Winona Ryder, David Harbour, Finn Wolfhard, Millie Bobby Brown

NETFLIX EXCLUSIVE Taking a long line of cinematic touchstones and giving them an affectionate rub, this exercise in '80s adventure will induce a nostalgic glow even in those too young to have ever worn deely boppers to a roller-disco or done a wheely on their BMX.

Over eight well-paced episodes it unfolds the story of three young boys in smalltown Indiana, whose friend Will vanishes without trace one night. What connection does his disappearance have to a nearby government lab, and to a shaven-

headed girl they find in the woods, who barely speaks a word and has a number tattooed on her wrist? It's an appealing mystery.

You don't need to be a film buff to spot some of the reference points: as the boys struggle to protect 11 (El for short) you're liable to flash on the likes of *Stand By Me*, *ET* and *Carrie*. Meanwhile, their older siblings are negotiating adolescent ups and downs in a John Hughes high school movie.

“Feels like somewhere you want to spend time”

Other reference points are a little less obvious – we may see posters of *The Thing* and *The Evil Dead*, but the gruesome monster of the piece seems more like something from a Brian Yuzna movie.

The icing on this retro cake is the casting of '80s/'90s goddess Winona Ryder as Will's distraught mom. It's a difficult role, requiring Ryder to spend much of her time hunched up on the brink of a breakdown, and she excels in it. It's encouraging to see her coming to the fore again on the small-screen, much as her *Heathers* co-star Christian Slater has in *Mr Robot* – both are too charismatic to be wasted on minor roles and DTV movies. David Harbour is equally impressive as police chief Hopper, a grouch who gradually reveals a

tragic backstory and a heart of gold. Add strong performances by the kids – particularly Millie Bobby Brown as El, as captivating here as she was playing a girl inhabited by a middle-aged man in *Intruders* – and a gorgeous electro score and you have something pretty irresistible.

There is the occasional misstep – writers please note, *nobody* used the word “stalker” in the '80s, while the idea of an average kid in Nowheresville USA being into The Smiths in 1983 set off our bullshit alarm. But mostly the setting seems authentic – and, more importantly, like somewhere you want to spend time. *Stranger Things* could have so easily felt like some cynically manufactured knock-off, a bootleg Chinese Rubik's Cube that creaks as you twist the faces, but it's suffused with far too much human warmth for that to ever become an issue.

Ian Berriman

i The Stephen King-esque font used for the title is ITC Benguiat. It was also used for the copyright notice on Paramount videos.



"Superman could definitely have you in a fight."

THE KILLING JOKE

No laughing matter

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

► Director Sam Liu

► Cast Kevin Conroy, Mark Hamill, Tara Strong, Ray Wise

◆ **Alan Moore's disowned the '80s graphic novel that inspired this animation: a viciously provocative take on the "one bad day" at the heart of the Batman and Joker feud he now calls "one of the worst things I've ever written".**

Moore's name is contractually absent and at first you'll struggle to detect his fingerprints at all. *100 Bullets'* Brian Azzarello writes an opening act that aims to give agency to Batgirl, compensating for her queasy victimhood in the original. The fact she bumps utility belts with the Dark Knight only introduces a whole new strain of ickiness. It feels like it's violating

something sacred at the very centre of the Bat mythos.

The rest is faithful, keeping Moore's mix of mean-hearted perversity and redemptive humanity intact, though the functional animation has none of the richness of Brian Bolland's original art. At least Mark Hamill's having a riot, relishing a musical number that suits his diseased, vaudevillian Joker to a twisted tee.

◆ **Extras** Extended behind-the-scenes peeks at upcoming DCU animation *Justice League Dark* plus *The Dark Knight Returns Parts 1 and 2*. There's also a featurette on 2014's *Batman: Assault On Arkham* but, bogglingly, no material on the making of *The Killing Joke* itself.

Nick Setchfield

i Originally the book was even more graphic, with one panel showing Barbara Gordon topless. Bolland was asked to tone it down.

THE COUNT YORGA COLLECTION

California Screaming

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1970/1971 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

► Director Bob Kelljan

► Cast Robert Quarry, Mariette Hartley, Roger Perry, Michael Murphy

◆ **It sounds like a range of faux-designer jewellery pimped by a thickly-accented huckster on QVC – "The Count Yorga collection! The most exquisite silver-plated lockets from Eastern Europe!" – but this double-header finally brings two cherished, influential '70s vampire films to Blu-ray.**

Originally pitched as a skin-flick, *Count Yorga, Vampire* exports the Bavarian blood-chaser to contemporary California,

mixing scarlet-lined cloaks and the counterculture in a manner Hammer would quickly ape with *Dracula AD 1972*. For all his classic trimmings Yorga's a predator for the age of the Manson murders – he preys on people in VW camper vans – and helmer Bob Kelljan's fondness for hand-held camerawork gives the essentially creaky tale a certain edgy energy. A scene where a woman munches on a dead kitten still feels transgressive.

Fast-tracked sequel *The Return Of Count Yorga* relocates the action to San Francisco. Sidelining the Count in favour of his weaponised brides, it has the look and feel of a TV movie but it feels richer than the original, adding a sense of



He always lost it when guests forgot to take their shoes off.

gothic melancholy as well as some sly meta humour (at one point we catch Yorga watching Hammer's *The Vampire Lovers* on TV).

Yes, the undead protagonist is Dracula by any other name, but star Robert Quarry is terrific, a silky, crystal-eyed rake with a great line in aristocratic disdain, suave as a tailored cape.

◆ **Extras** Commentaries by film

historian David Del Valle and filmmaker Courtney Joyner; "An Appreciation By Kim Newman" – a three-minute riff about the Yorga movies delivered in engaging, informed style by the horror maven; galleries; trailers; collector's booklet. **Nick Setchfield**

i An abandoned movie proposal would have teamed Yorga with Vincent Price's eternally abominable Dr Phibes.

11.22.63

Characterless assassination

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Creator **Bridget Carpenter**

▶ Cast **James Franco, Sarah Gadon, George MacKay, Daniel Webber**

❖ **After killing Hitler**, daytripping to the Crucifixion and pondering the wisdom of shagging one of your grandparents to see if you can become your own ancestor, the next most common thing on every time traveller's bucket list is preventing the assassination of JFK. Which is probably why there were weary sighs when Stephen King tackled this hoary old sci-fi chestnut with his 2011 book *11/22/63*. Against all odds, it turned out to be his best novel in yonks.

Sadly, the miniseries based on it isn't a similar treat. Quite the

opposite. This is a plodding, lethargic, charm-free clunker with lifeless characters and pay-off-free plotlines. In the book time travel is a mere means to an end, a hook on which to hang a whole load of King's other preoccupations: his nostalgia for '60s small-town America; his exhaustive research into the facts of the assassination and the life of Lee Harvey Oswald; a surprisingly tender love story which embodies the book's theme about small personal choices having as much impact on the world as the big game-changing ones; oh, and a bit of gore, of course.

The miniseries, conversely, becomes hung up on time travel, with "time" practically becoming a character in the narrative. It's a poor choice, as it starts making you ask questions about the way time travel operates in the series,

which it never answers. This starts as a niggler, but ultimately becomes a debilitating stumbling block.

When teacher Jake Epping (James Franco) discovers a portal to 1960 in the cupboard of a diner he decides it's worth waiting around for three years in the past for the opportunity to save Kennedy. Then each week the show decides it needs to address the fact that it's a time travel show, with paradoxes, weirdness and moral discussions. Meanwhile, the love story so central to the book becomes a cold exercise in plotting necessity, not helped by the fact that Franco's Epping is at best an impossible-to-read blank canvas, and at worst an utterly unlikeable prick.

It's not all bad. Daniel Webber puts in an utterly compelling and

“A plodding, lethargic, charm-free clunker”

subtly complex performance as Lee Harvey Oswald. The period detail is impeccable, and the recreation of famous events from history is very impressive indeed. There are a couple of genuinely exciting action sequences. And the season-closer delivers a mighty swerveball (direct from the book) that almost makes sitting through the previous seven episodes of listless stodge worthwhile.

Even then, though, that final episode leaves too many questions unanswered – questions that didn't matter in the book, but which feel vital here. But a second season that might answer those questions would be pointless, as there's nowhere left for the characters to go.

❖ **Extras** Just a 14-minute Making Of. **Dave Golder**

Stephen King Easter eggs include a cameo from the car from *Christine* and some “redrum” graffiti (à la *The Shining*).



She only wanted her ear syringed.

SOUTHBOUND

Road kills

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Directors **Radio Silence,**

Roxanne Benjamin, David Bruckner, Patrick Horvath

▶ Cast **Kate Beahan, Matt**

Bettinelli-Olpin, Susan Burke

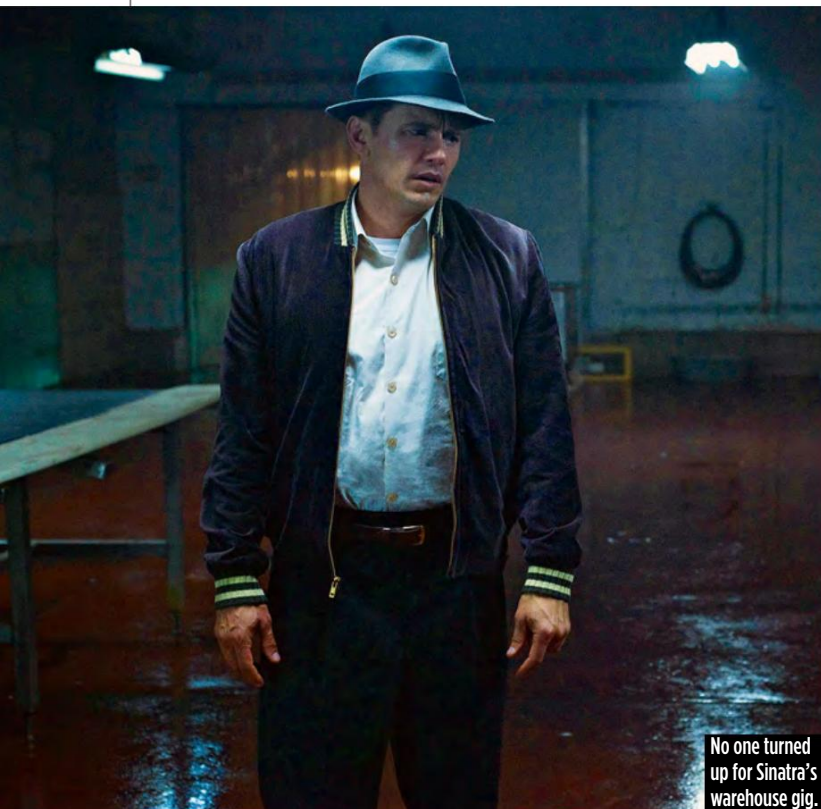
❖ **Five stories, one deserted** highway... But not that deserted or we wouldn't have this horror anthology, whose novelty is that the tales are interconnected – sometimes cleverly, sometimes less so. Steer clear if you dislike night shoots or a sometimes unclear narrative.

We start with “The Way Out”, in which two thugs are caught up in a *Twilight Zone*-type scenario involving a roadside cafe that just won't go away. The highlight: monsters that are like scarier versions of the Reapers from *Doctor Who*'s “Father's Day”. “Siren” follows a familiar pattern – three girls in a van break down and are taken in by a weird couple – but is entertaining enough.

“The Accident” is the pick, a tense and unusual story of a driver, an injured girl and a mobile phone that may or may not be connected to medical services. It just goes on a tad too long. Rescue yarn “Jailbreak” doesn't amount to much, and, finally, “The Way In” is little more than a nasty route back to the first story. *Southbound*'s circular nature thus invites a rewatch, but you may be able to resist making the whole journey again.

❖ **Extras** Commentary by all the directors. **Russell Lewin**

Keep 'em peeled for the film showing on a television in the cafe early on: it's cult 1962 horror *Carnival Of Souls*.



No one turned up for Sinatra's warehouse gig.



They would have got up but their clothes were too heavy.

TALE OF TALES

Grim fairytale

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Matteo Garrone

▶ Cast Salma Hayek, Vincent Cassel, John C Reilly, Toby Jones

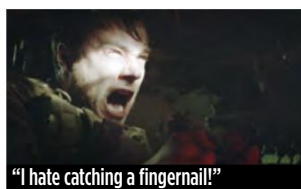
◆ **Mention *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty*** and chances are you think of Disney, but the earliest published variants were set down by Neapolitan courtier Giambattista Basile. *Tale Of Tales* adapts three further stories from his collections, and with its grotesque imagery, savage violence and adult sexuality is worlds away from Walt.

In one, Salma Hayek's Queen turns to a sorcerer to give her a son. In another, a King (Toby Jones, quite hilarious) makes a pet of a giant flea. In a third, Vincent Cassel's horndog monarch mistakenly woos an old crone.

Unsanitised and carnivalesque (brace for an FFM threesome and a hula-hooping bear), these dark fairytales feel authentically of the oral tradition, wending their way through absurdist turns that make them impossible to predict. They're ravishingly beautiful too, with lavish costumes and stunning Italian locations. One weakness: the tales are interwoven, but there's practically nothing to connect them. A series of standalone TV dramas might work better. How about it, HBO?

◆ **Extras** A delightful Making Of (56 minutes) with much behind-the-scenes footage, full of quirky details – like Salma Hayek being pushed around in an inflatable dinghy. Plus: three interviews (40 minutes) and the trailer. **Ian Berriman**

i A major influence on Garrone was Goya's grotesque Los Caprichos etchings – he had prints of them stuck to his office wall.



"I hate catching a fingernail!"

TANK 432

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 22 AUGUST**

2015 | 15 | DVD

◆ **The marketing bigs up the name** of executive producer Ben Wheatley but the presence of Michael Smiley and a shudder of British pastoral weirdness aside, there's little of his imprint on this low-budget horror.

A squad of soldiers stumbles upon an abandoned tank in a warzone. Soon they're faced with escalating psychological meltiness that soon becomes crushingly dull. Cheating you of answers and mistaking nightmare logic for true tension, a pile-up of poor storytelling choices ultimately frustrates.

◆ **Extras** None. **Nick Setchfield**



Michael J Fox is one of the interviewees.

BACK IN TIME

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | E | DVD

◆ **This lo-fi documentary on the *Back To The Future* movies** is a curious, haphazardly ordered mix of Making Of and fanbase celebration. Most of the main players give new interviews, and there's the odd fresh anecdote, but there's too much on those fans.

Not as stirring as it should be – you'd probably be better off checking out the bonus features on one of the trilogy box sets.

◆ **Extras** Six featurettes (37 minutes) featuring longer interviews, more DeLorean, more props, more fans; trailer.

Russell Lewin



"Next!" cried Simon Cowell.

LAZER TEAM

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

◆ **This sci-fi comedy was funded by an Indiegogo campaign** that raised \$2.4 million, and you can see where the cash went – it's slicker, glossier and more professional than any movie with a script this bad should be. Following a gang of misfits as they fight to save the Earth from aliens, it's also sexist, predictable and embarrassingly juvenile. One or two funny lines ease the pain a little, but it's like putting a plaster on a decapitation.

◆ **Extras** Deleted scenes; VFX breakdown; music featurette; bloopers. **Jayne Nelson**



Never tell him John was funnier.

RETROACTIVE

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

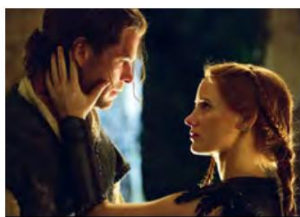
▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1997 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

◆ **BLU-RAY DEBUT** **Think Shane Black does *Groundhog Day*.** This darkly amusing crime thriller has an SF twist, as a hostage negotiator stumbles across a time travel experiment after seeing a petty crim kill his wife. Repeatedly trying to undo it, she just makes things worse... Shootouts and energetic chases unfold against stunning vistas of Texan desert, while James Belushi reaches Nic Cage levels of OTT as the douchebag Frank. A pulpy obscurity worthy of a cult following.

◆ **Extras** A gallery and trailers. **Ian Berriman**

HOME ENTERTAINMENT



Chris's head would sometimes fall off.

THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

Not worth hunting out

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2016 | 12 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Cedric Nicolas-Troyan

▶ Cast Chris Hemsworth, Jessica

Chastain, Charlize Theron

❖ **Both a prequel and a sequel** to *Snow White And The Huntsman*, *Winter's War* is sadly nowhere near its equal – and not just because Snow is a no-show. While the first film was far from a classic it had a sense of wonder and some epic cinematography. *Winter's War*, on the other hand, with its make-do effects, workmanlike script and misfiring comedy, feels uncannily like a straight-to-video sequel from the '80s.

It begins with an origin story for the Huntsman and Ice Queen Freya, the emo sister of the first film's über-witch Ravenna, set before the first film. Then there's a big time-jump to a post *Snow White* period. That's when things become ploddingly predictable quest fare with comedy sidekicks.

It's competent. It's mildly entertaining. It's well acted. It's also wearying unadventurous and quite often simply dull.

❖ **Extras** The Blu-ray includes a gag reel (nine minutes), four deleted scenes (nine minutes), five featurettes (36 minutes), a director's commentary and an extended cut that adds six minutes of not-much-of-any-interest (including a really boring new post-credits scene).

Dave Golder

i Some filming took place at Puzzlewood in the Forest of Dean – also used for *The Force Awakens*.



Lassie's camera tour of New York City was a massive success.

LIMITLESS The Life Of Brian

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 22 AUGUST**

2015-2016 | 15 | DVD

▶ Creator Craig Sweeny

▶ Cast Jake McDorman, Jennifer

Carpenter, Hill Harper, Mary Elizabeth

Mastrantonio, Colin Salmon

❖ **It's a shame this TV spin-off** from the intriguing Bradley Cooper movie of 2011 didn't click with more viewers, getting cancelled after just one season. Despite a few issues, it had a lot of potential, toyed with being genuinely innovative and was often hilarious to watch. Still, you can't help feeling by the time you get to the end of these 22 episodes that it seems to have said everything it wants to say: another season could have seen it run out of ideas, and it does wrap up rather well as it is.

The show follows the exploits

“The show isn't quite as smart as it thinks it is”

of an ordinary Joe named Brian (Jake McDorman) who pops pills that give him unparalleled mental prowess, thus enabling him to team up with the FBI to solve cases. You can tell when Brian's on drugs because the cinematography changes: everything becomes colourful and saturated and it's like you're tripping with him, plus he also has hallucinations – many of which are great fun, from cartoon sequences to *Ferris Bueller* homages. But underneath all the gloss, glamour and (often brilliant) geeky references, there are some rather clunky police procedural plots. There's also only so much chirpy narration that your head starts to hurt.

Guest appearances from Bradley Cooper himself do help (the show kicks off as his movie character is starting to make eyes at the White House), and the cast – especially *Dexter*'s Jennifer Carpenter and our very own Colin Salmon – are great. But *Limitless* suffers from smug overload and isn't quite as smart as it thinks it is.

❖ **Extras** None. **Meg Wilde**

i In one ep, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio's character is resuscitated in a brilliant homage to a scene in 1989's *The Abyss*.



Fingers: even more numerous in mirrors.

IDENTICALS

The new you blues

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 22 AUGUST**

2016 | 15 | DVD

▶ Director Simon Pummell

▶ Cast Lachlan Nieboer, Nora-Jane Noone, Nick Blood, Tony Way

❖ **The feature film debut** of praisebombed documentary maker Simon Pummell (*Bodyson*), *Identicals* is a visually impressive, if slightly chilly, SF tech thriller starring *Downton Abbey*'s Lachlan Nieboer as a man who's given a “life upgrade” by the sinister Brand New-U corporation.

Taking place in either a future London or an alternative reality (either way, it seems iPhone ringtones are the same as in 2016), there's barely a shot that isn't visually gorgeous. The movie has a steely, burnished look, and Pummell's camera moves with panther-like grace. His script, however, is less sure-footed, mistaking sparsity for profundity.

Nieboer gives a rather stiff performance as Slater, while Nora-Jane Noone has little to do as Nadia, the love of his (other) life and the reason why Brand New-U keeps dropping in on him for a warning beating.

Identicals is undeniably thought-stirring, but its austerity makes it an arduous watch. With its British locales and accents, it feels like a lost episode of *Black Mirror*, and it's easy to imagine that Charlie Brooker would have told this story with a lot more heart.

❖ **Extras** Director interview (14 minutes); effects breakdown (four minutes). **Steve O'Brien**

i The germ of the idea for Pummell came driving past his old London flat after starting a new life in Amsterdam.

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Seconds later Pac-Man ate them all.



THESE FINAL HOURS

Aussies get barbecued

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2013 | 15 | DVD

▶ Director Zak Hilditch

▶ Cast Nathan Phillips, Angourie Rice, Jessica De Gouw, Kathryn Beck

◆ **We've had a fair crop of** countdown-to-apocalypse films in recent years, with the likes of Lars Von Trier's *Melancholia*, Abel Ferrara's *4.44: Last Day On Earth* and Steve Carell romcom *Seeking A Friend For The End Of The World*. *These Final Hours* sees Australia getting in on the act, as the firestorm from a meteor strike sweeps across the globe.

To begin with, as the musclebound, sweaty-vested James (Nathan Phillips) fends off a machete-wielding maniac en route to an end of the world orgy/drugfest, it looks like we're all set for action-packed, testosterone-

drenched Ozploitation. However, saving a young girl called Rose (Angourie Rice) from abductors soon cracks the walls of James's macho denial, forcing him to question whether that's really where he wants to be.

Don't expect philosophical lightning bolts – the characters are far too no-nonsense for that. Even the radio voice who acts as a chorus has nothing of note to say. The developing relationship between James and Rose is the main draw, and though that central arc is as predictable as you'd expect, strong performances from the pair ensure it has considerable sweetness and sadness; as their bond deepens, so does the film's appeal.

◆ **Extras** Just a gallery. **Ian Berriman**

i Writer/director Zak Hilditch is working on a TV series version for Fox, which will relocate events to San Francisco.

LEGENDS OF TOMORROW

Season One

Arrow spin-off misses target

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 29 AUGUST**

2016 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Cast Victor Garber, Brandon Routh, Arthur Darvill, Caity Lotz

◆ **Legends Of Tomorrow** is either the third or fourth Arrowverse show, depending on how far you're willing to retcon *Supergirl* into the equation. It's also the least successful. Seems you *can* have too much of a good thing.

This is the Arrowverse's "team show", mixing *Justice League* with *Doctor Who* – it even stars Arthur "Rory" Darvill in a Captain Jack costume, with a razor-sharp parting that can slice through time... Well, no – actually he commands a time ship, the

Waverider, to do that. But the parting is awesome.

He collects together a ragtag team of B-list DC heroes and antiheroes – Firestorm, Hawkman, Hawkgirl, Captain Cold, Heatwave, the Atom, White Canary – all united in a reluctance ever to use their naff codenames. They nip back and forth in time, trying to prevent a stunningly awful immortal panto villain called Vandal Savage from creating a future apocalypse, in a series of stories that treat temporal logic with a contempt that would leave even Steven Moffat in tears.

There's some impressive action, and seeing superheroes in the Wild West or World War II is undeniably fun. But the characters



The chuggers got ever more persistent.

are painfully thin, despite valiant efforts from some of the cast. The humour often feels forced and the emotional beats – which *The Flash* and *Arrow* often create with a deft economy – fall flat. It feels like the fast, fun and palatably schmaltzy formula so cleverly employed in the other Arrowverse shows is stretched too thin across such a vast and constantly bickering cast.

◆ **Extras** Around 50 minutes of stuff: the show's 2015 Comic-Con panel; a behind-the-scenes featurette on Jonah Hex episode "The Magnificent Eight"; a tour of the Waverider set; a featurette on the different eras the show travels to; a gag reel. **Dave Golder**

i The episode "Night Of The Hawk" – a '50s B-movie homage – is directed by Joe "Gremlins" Dante.



King Kong: the domestic years.

THE BRAND NEW TESTAMENT

A date with destiny

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 15 | DVD

▶ Director **Jaco Van Dormael**

▶ Cast **Pili Groyne, Benoît Poelvoorde, Catherine Deneuve, François Damiens**

☛ **God is a prick. At least he is** in this blissfully blasphemous Belgian fantasy, which sees his daughter (less well known than his son) rebel against her old man. For one thing, she's fed up with some of the rules he's invented: toast with jam on will always land jam-side down, the queue you're in will always go slower than the one you're not in, and so on. So she does a fiendish thing to mess the world up: send everyone with a mobile the date that they're going to die.

So we get a fella who, knowing he's not due to expire for 60 years, starts flinging himself out of buildings in the knowledge that somehow he'll have a soft landing. Another goes to the park to gun people down – if he succeeds he's not to blame, as they were due to die that day anyway.

It's a delicious, dark concept, and the film's full of dry wit and surreal surprises. Much of the dialogue is mordantly funny, including the hassled God's. Unhurried in pace, it tells intertwined stories of human beings' struggles to manage in this crazy world, which is best summed up by a tramp character: "Life is like a skating rink. Lots of people fall down."

☛ **Extras** None. **Russell Lewin**

i The director has a cameo, as a man who gets killed by a bus the second after he gets his text message.



Frank and Sue nervously entered the swingers party.

SOLARIS/STALKER

Inner visions

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

22 AUGUST

1972/1979 | 12/PG | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director **Andrei Tarkovsky**

▶ Cast **Natalya Bondarchuk, Donatas Banionis, Aleksandr Kaydanovskiy,**

Anatoliy Solonitsyn

BLU-RAY DEBUT At nearly three hours a-piece, Andrei Tarkovsky's two science fiction classics are demanding, but rewarding journeys into the human soul.

Solaris (★★★★★) mixes the crisp outer-space sterility of Kubrick's *2001* (a film that the Russian director is said to have loathed) with human tragedy. Psychologist Kelvin is dispatched to a station orbiting the planet Solaris to help the troubled crew, only to encounter his dead wife, apparently resurrected by an intelligence on the planet below. It's a haunting premise, beautifully filmed, but with a 40-minute infodump first act that can be charitably described as "taxing". *Solaris* rewards patience, but you will tire of Kelvin staring blankly at monitors.

Stalker (★★★★★) is, if anything, even more oblique, and yet its lack of plot works to the

film's advantage. A mysterious event has created The Zone – a strange, contaminated area now sealed off by the military. Three men journey into it and into themselves in a film that owes more to *Waiting For Godot* than it does *Roadside Picnic*, the novel it was based on. It's visually and sonically arresting, with Tarkovsky lulling you into a dream-state of decaying power plants and water-logged dereliction. Today, it feels like an eerie premonition of Chernobyl, seven years before the disaster.

☛ **Extras** Both films share excerpts from Andrei Tarkovsky's Metaphysical Dream Zone – an essay read out over footage from the films, and as thrilling as that sounds – and come with 40-page booklets. *Solaris* (★★★★★) includes an interesting interview with actress Natalya Bondarchuk, while *Stalker* (★★★★★) includes chats with set designer Rashit Safiullin and a melancholy final interview with cinematographer Aleksander Knyazhinsky (who passed away in 1996). **Will Salmon**

i The term "Stalker" has been adopted in real life by brave/foolish people who explore the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

(ROUND UP)



League Of Gentlemen-ish Danish film **MEN AND CHICKEN** (out now, Blu-ray/DVD) sees two brothers travelling to a remote island after discovering they're not their late dad's biological offspring. We said: "Its grotesque oddity will delight and disturb in equal measure." Jonathan Nolan's techno thriller continues with **PERSON OF INTEREST SEASON FOUR** (5 September, Blu-ray/DVD) which has a run of episodes mid-run that all feel like season finales, as two potentially omnipotent AIs go into battle. The twist rate is exhilarating, and one episode, "If-Then-Else" – the cleverest *Groundhog Day* episode you'll ever see – is worth buying the box set for alone. Readers old enough to remember *Monkey* may also have fond memories of

THE WATER MARGIN (22 August, Blu-ray/DVD). Based on a 14th century Chinese novel, this martial arts saga (with minor fantasy elements) sees a bunch of renegades taking on a tyrannical government. The DVD release of the English dub that came out over a decade ago featured numerous trims for a teatime slot; now all 26 episodes have been restored, and the deleted scenes reinstated. Finally, there's a 25th anniversary edition of fantasy-comedy

DROP DEAD FRED (29 August, Blu-ray/DVD), in which the imaginary friend of a young girl returns to wreak havoc once the grown woman loses her husband and job. Mixing black comedy about mental illness with toilet humour and slapstick, it's an odd mix, but Rik Mayall's livewire turn as the anarchic Fred ensured a cult following.

BOOKS



INVASION

No dice, man



► **RELEASED 6 SEPTEMBER**

432 pages | Paperback

► Author **Luke Rhinehart**

► Publisher **Titan Books**

◆ **Luke Rhinehart passed away** in August 2012, only to change his mind and come back to life again a few months later. It's a neat trick, made even more impressive when you consider that he'd never actually existed in the first place.

Rhinehart, of course, is the alter ego of George Cockcroft, whose 1971 novel *The Dice Man* – about a psychiatrist who resolves to make every decision on the throw of a die – inspired a minor movement among people who figured blind chance might be as good a way of navigating this world as any. Cockcroft himself, meanwhile, assumed the lead character's name – and a fair share of his philosophy – for all subsequent writings, deliberately blurring the line between man and myth.

Invasion – the 83-year-old's first novel since his faked death and subsequent resurrection – uses an incursion by hyper-intelligent alien fuzzballs as the pretext for a droll yet impassioned assessment of modern America's prodigious

shortcomings: all the boiling madness of the 21st century as seen through the eyes of visiting extra-terrestrials.

Despite being “hairy beachballs” with only rudimentary shapeshifting abilities, the ETs succeed in launching a sophisticated cyber-attack on everything from Wall Street to the President's Twitter account, with the apparent intention of bringing about social justice and a wholesale redistribution of wealth entirely for kicks.

They find a largely willing – if frequently bewildered – accomplice in Billy Morton, a grizzled Long Island fisherman roped in to help them game the system. Though Rhinehart employs his trademark device of regularly switching narrators, it's this former '60s radical – a thinly-veiled avatar of the reclusive author himself (at one point, he

“Rhinehart has plenty of targets in his crosshairs”

even fakes his own death) – who relates the lion's share of the action, in a style that eschews literary flourish in favour of a folksy, down-home wisdom. Along with his wife and sons, Billy finds himself tossed on a tide of events that carry him from Bermuda to Baghdad, aiding and abetting the Hairy Balls in their fight against a succession of foaming right-wing hawks and blowhards.

As America stares down the barrel of a possible Trump presidency, there's perhaps never been a more urgent need for a new *Catch-22* or *Slaughterhouse-Five*. And from corporate greed and rampant consumerism to gun control, military disasters in the Middle East and draconian Homeland Security legislation, Rhinehart has plenty of targets in his crosshairs.

But the truth is he is no Heller or Vonnegut, and there's a frustratingly woolly naivety to much of his analysis of the world's ills, which he's partial to delivering via weighty infodumps with only tangential relevance to the story. These reach peak sledgehammer-to-nut ratio in the regular break-out “Items From The News”, which strive for the satirical bite of *The Onion*, but feel more like being beaten about the head by a series of Occupy placards. (The UK, for example, is described as “a US aircraft carrier lying off the coast of Europe, used for bombing Arabs in various places in the Middle East and Africa”. Ba dum tish.)

There's much to enjoy in *Invasion*: you'll root for old Billy, while the aliens themselves – beings of unfathomable higher intelligence disguised, often literally, as wisecracking goofballs – are terrific fun. And few will blame a Zen-loving veteran peacenik like Rhinehart for despairing as he continues to watch the American dream curdle. But the net result often feels less like a novel than the collected thoughts of the guy at the next barstool – a national autopsy conducted with the bluntest of blunt instruments. **Paul Kirkley**

i Both Mark Waters (*Mean Girls*) and Duncan Jones (*Moon*) have tried to develop *Dice Man* movies, without success.



NEVERNIGHT

She's a killer teen



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

643 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Jay Kristoff**

► Publisher **HarperVoyager**

◆ **A hidden castle, training** teenagers in secret arts. Rivalries and family hatreds between classmates. A young orphan with hidden talents. There's a lot about this novel – the first in a new trilogy from the author of Japanese steampunk series *The Lotus War* – that feels familiar. But that's not a bad thing, especially when it's as well written as this.

Mia Corvere is 16 years old, a trained killer who wants only to become better still so she can avenge the deaths of her family. She joins the Red Church as an apprentice – a class of 28, they will study for a year until four of them are taken on as Blades, the most feared assassins in the world. She has the darkness on her side, able to manipulate the shadows around to help her, but that might not be enough to get her through...

Entertaining and witty throughout, *Nevernight* feels like a YA novel with added sex and gore – which, though explicit, is always firmly on the side of humour and easy reading rather than gritty and grimdark. There's an over-abundance of not-as-entertaining-as-the-author-thinks footnotes early on, but fortunately these thin out towards the end, leaving you with a strong, well-realised story you'll enjoy to the last page. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Kristoff gets a tattoo for each series he sells. His *Nevernight* one features Mia's face: <http://bit.ly/nevertat>.



LAMENT FOR THE FALLEN

The Great Escape

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

378 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Gavin Chait

► Publisher Doubleday

❖ The line between “general literature” and genre fiction is getting thinner every day, and the latest book to explore this territory is *Lament Of The Fallen*, a book that’s unashamedly sci-fi but is also being marketed as similar to recent work by literary authors like David Mitchell and Michel Faber.

It’s to debut author Gavin Chait’s credit that the book is often strong enough to support these comparisons. His story explores a convincingly realised future world, as a self-sufficient West African community is disrupted by the sudden arrival of an augmented escapee from an American orbital prison. This escapee’s quest to return home forms the backbone of the plot. Around this Chait has crafted lyrical prose and imaginative world-building.

For its first three-quarters, the book is gripping, powerful and frequently impressive – which makes it all the more frustrating that Chait doesn’t stick the landing, instead losing the delicate focus of the earlier chapters in favour of a broader perspective and some oddly bombastic action. Still, while the flaws are hard to ignore, this remains an ambitious and intelligent work that marks out Chait as a writer worthy of further attention. **Saxon Bullock**

i The book was worked on for over 30 years, with the first version written when Chait was just 12 years old.



HEART OF GRANITE

Let slip the reptiles of war

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 18 AUGUST**

416 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author James Barclay

► Publisher Gollancz

❖ Not so much a novel as a high concept in search of a production designer, *Heart Of Granite*’s bat’s-arse future of giant-reptile-themed hardware makes a whole load of military SF clichés feel fresh and exciting. It helps that Barclay’s knack for pacy prose and deftly-drawn characters remains intact as he redirects his skills from the fantasy fare he’s famous for.

The book is the first in a planned duology, though it’s such good fun, set in a world bursting with possibilities, don’t be too surprised if more arrive. The basic conceit is that alien technology has transformed Earth technology so that a future war between five power blocs is being fought using giant organic hardware. It’s like Kaiju have bred with Mecha.

“Pure pulp nonsense, but utterly compelling”

Troops travel inside giant biomechanoid reptiles, kilometres long. The airforce has been replaced by soldiers who pilot “drakes” – dragons, basically – with man and beast in direct neural link.

It’s this link – and the mental effect it has on the pilots – that becomes the core of the story, as one government risks its best squadron with an untested upgrade in a push to end the war. Cue said squadron rebelling when it realises it’s being used as lab rats and the powers-that-be can’t be trusted.

It’s pure pulp nonsense, but utterly compelling. In terms of plot, there’s little you haven’t seen or read before (plucky pilots, conniving politicians, conspiracies), but the world is so enticingly crafted that the story rarely feels stale. The grunts work inside behemoths with seepage problems, bass-woofer heartbeats and certain areas best avoided (think of the smell!), and the Heart of Granite – the book’s equivalent of an aircraft carrier – is evocatively, and somewhat ickily, brought to life. Barclay’s a dab hand at writing an aerial dogfight, too. At times, this could be *Star Wars* with pteranodons. **Dave Golder**

i Barclay still has the first short story he wrote, at the age of 13, called “Troja: Dawn”. “It was and is utterly awful.”



POISON CITY

Durban degeneration

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

352 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Paul Crilley

► Publisher Hodder & Stoughton

❖ As urban fantasy novels go, *Poison City* is a solid example of the genre. The lead character, Gideon Tau, works as an investigator – specifically, for Delphic Division in Durban, South Africa. There’s a good selection of mythological creatures from a range of mythologies, from African gods to vampires to Abrahamic angels. There are crimes to be investigated, plucky secondary characters, and the usual smartmouthed comic relief (in this case, a urinating alcoholic Border Terrier that’s actually Tau’s spirit guide). While there’s nothing startlingly original about it, *Poison City* will suit readers of *The Dresden Files* or the *Rivers Of London* books right down to the ground.

It would have been good if the story felt more African – somehow, most of it feels as though the story could have been dropped into an LA or London setting with very little difficulty; little about it seems tied to its location. Similarly Tau is a little too much the stereotypical “cop with a tragic backstory”, an anyman for anywhere. There’s enough action and enough plot twists to make that acceptable in this initial volume. But if Tau’s adventures are to continue, he, and the books, will need to develop some depth.

Miriam McDonald

i Also out: Paul Crilley’s *Daredevil: The Man Without Fear*, a prose novel based on the Frank Miller comic.

Sigourney Weaver and Bill Paxton enjoy a warming drink between takes on the med lab scene.



ALIENS: THE SET PHOTOGRAPHY

Cameron on camera

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

144 pages | Hardback

► Author Simon Ward

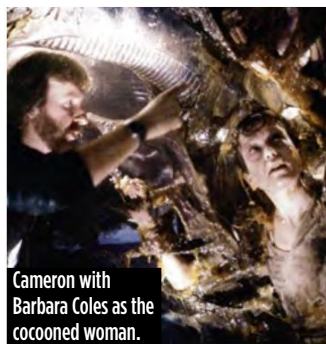
► Publisher Titan Books

☛ **This coffee table book takes us back to LV-426 as James Cameron's military SF classic marks its 30th anniversary.**

It's split up into three parts: cast and crew, on set and behind-the-scenes – though "in the workshop" might have been a better title for the latter, as there are plenty of snaps from behind the camera in that second section, many of them featuring '80s jumpers more terrifying than any Xenomorph.

It's the candid shots that are the real gold – Sigourney wrapped in a tinfoil blanket drinking coffee, or pulling a face as she does an impression of the Alien Queen;

“It's the candid shots that are the real gold”



Cameron with Barbara Coles as the cocooned woman.

little Newt's stunt double cutting her birthday cake – and there are just enough of these to give the production a human face.

If there's a major disappointment, considering the £25 RRP, it's that the images that have been blown up to a two-page spread generally don't really support that, looking grainy or soft. But fresh commentary by Carrie Henn (Newt) and Jenette Goldstein (Vasquez) compensates, as does an introduction by Henn which features some very sweet anecdotes. **Ian Berriman**

i Carrie Henn got too friendly with the Alien actors to feel scared of them, so she used to pretend she was being chased by dogs.



INFERNAL

Amnesiac antiheroics

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

384 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Mark de Jager

► Publisher Del Rey

☛ **Stratus isn't sure what he is. Or where he is. Or even how he got there. What he does know is that he's not entirely human, and that he's got to find out more.**

This amnesia provides an intriguing mystery for author Mark de Jager's epic debut, but can get a little wearing. Sure you want to know who Stratus is, and the reveal somewhat pays off, but for the most part, between Stratus's inhuman instincts and his confusion about his identity he isn't particularly likeable. Except when he's hungry – his appetite is quite amusing. Getting an antihero right is a balancing act, and sometimes Stratus unfortunately leans more towards anti- than hero.

Other characters are used sparingly, swordswoman Tatyana being the highlight. Her introduction makes things more interesting, giving Stratus someone to parry the odd quip with, and she comes with a promising backstory of her own.

For much of the time *Infernal* may leave you feeling as confused as Stratus himself – for every question answered another 10 sprout up in its place. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it makes for hard going in a book that rests so heavily on its central mystery. **Bridie Roman**

i Mark's wife Liz beat him into print: book three of her *Blackheart Legacy* series came out in January.

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS



DOCTOR WHO: THE OFFICIAL COOKBOOK

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

153 pages | Hardback

► Author Joanna Farrow

► Publisher BBC Books

● A proper cookbook, with eccentric but do-able recipes inspired by monsters and other things from the series.

● Some of the recipe pics look brilliant. Our favourites: Ood Head Bread, Slitheen Cuisine (potato based), Pizza Cassandra and Zygon Pie.

● But some may not taste so good. Blueberries with hard-boiled eggs for Atraxi Snax, anyone?!

● See if you can bake a better soufflé than the Impossible Girl – there's a recipe for that too.

● A "Hello, Sweeties" section features a selection of dessert delights, such as Adipose Pavlova and jelly babies.

● Definitely better than the 1985 book of the same name, featuring Castrovalvan Kebabs and Chancellor Flavia's Chicken Favourite.



Reviews



BITE

Fast food



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

374 pages | Paperback/ebook

▶ Author KS Merbeth

▶ Publisher Orbit

❖ *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* cornered the “teenage girl coping in a post-apocalyptic society” market, but *Bite* proves the premise still has plenty of teeth. It does so by baring those gnashers in a blood-soaked, giddy grin. Where those books move through the ruins of the world wearing pristine uniforms and a frown, *Bite* gleefully runs around its *Mad Max* universe covered in dirt and gore.

It opens with our heroine, known only as “Kid”, catching a ride with a couple of miscreants, Wolf and Dolly, who are revealed to be “Sharks” – mercenaries who trade in meat, specifically *human* meat. When the folk in the next town realise what the gang are selling, all hell breaks loose. Kid finds herself joining the gang of cannibals before discovering that, in a world where men make their own laws, there are much worse crimes than a varied palate...

Like her leads, author Kristyn Merbeth breaks all sorts of rules along the way – the baddies are the heroes, the romantic interest is a coward, and the plot is fast-paced to the point of parody, but she never fails to entertain. If this is the first course, we eagerly await a second. **Sam Ashurst**

i Merbeth first explored the idea at school, writing a story about cannibals falling in love in a post-apoc world.



BEHIND THE THRONE

Imperial intrigue



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

406 pages | Paperback/ebook

▶ Author KB Wagers

▶ Publisher Orbit

❖ *SF* may be a genre of ideas, but it also isn't afraid to throw those ideas aside in favour of pulp thrills sometimes. The space opera subgenre is probably the best example of this, often retooling mythic fantasy in an SF setting (hello there, *Star Wars*) – but sometimes the process can go a little too far, as is the case in *Behind The Throne*.

The first in a trilogy, it's the story of Hail Bristol, a self-reliant gunrunner who's also the runaway heir to the Indaran Empire. When Hail's past catches up with her, she's forced to return to the Imperial Court, where her remaining siblings have died in suspicious circumstances and there's a dark conspiracy afoot. It's up to Hail to survive long enough to claim the throne.

While debut author KB Wagers gets some mileage out of Hail's struggles with her destiny, the world-building is vague and muddled, while the emphasis on courtly intrigue leaves this reading more like a clichéd high fantasy. Despite an interesting kick-ass heroine and a few strong action sequences, *Behind The Throne* lacks the pulpy invention that makes space opera truly shine.

Saxon Bullock

i As well as sequels, Wagers is working on a story that's like “*Hitchhiker's*” got into a fight with *Battlestar Galactica*.

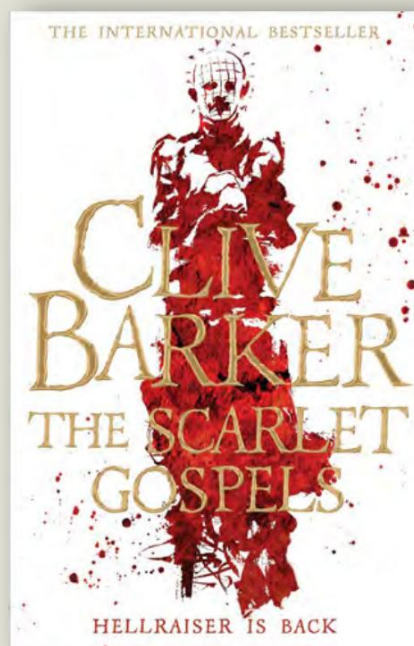
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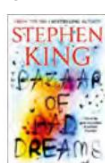
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REISSUES

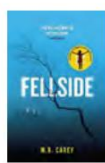
Getting the paperback treatment this month: Stephen King's latest collection, **THE BAZAAR OF BAD DREAMS**



(★★★★★, 6 September, Hodder), which collects 20 works from the last six years, three of them

previously unpublished.

We said: "The overall standard remains remarkably high", but warned that King's introductions to certain stories give away a little too much. Read them afterwards, eh? New movie tie-in editions of *The Girl With All The Gifts* will be jostling for shelf space with MR Carey's latest, **FELLSIDE** (★★★★★, 25 August, Orbit). Set in



the titular prison, it centres on a female inmate who makes contact with a ghost while dying on

hunger strike. We said: "More twists and surprises would have been welcome, but on the whole this is a solid and enjoyable read".

Catherynne M Valente's **RADIANCE** (★★★★★, out now, Corsair)



is set in a retro-futuristic remix of classic-era Hollywood. Presented in a

found-footage style, it deals with the mysterious disappearance of a renowned documentary filmmaker. We said:

"Valente has crafted beautiful imagery and packed every page with breathtaking invention, but *Radiance's* fragmented narrative ultimately leaves it easier to admire than to enjoy." Also worth checking out: the SF Masterworks reissue of *Swastika Night* by feminist author Katharine Burdekin (aka Murray Constantine); this far-future Nazi dystopia, first published in 1937, really deserves to be better known.



AN ACCIDENT OF STARS

Feminist fantasy

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

444 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author Foz Meadows

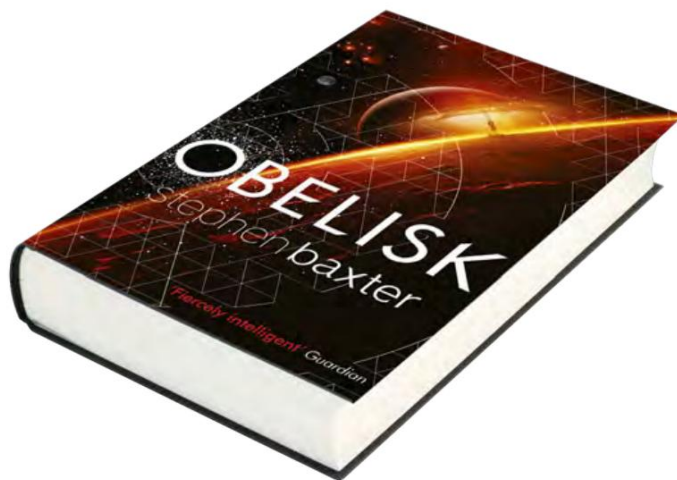
► Publisher Angry Robot

❖ In 2016, it shouldn't be noteworthy to say that a work of fiction has plenty of female characters, that it passes the Bechdel test, that it shows women in positions of power and represents a full spectrum of colours, sexualities and genders while it's at it – but it is. So we'll say all those things about *An Accident Of Stars*, because it's great – and still, sadly, unusual – to see them, and also because that means we're especially pleased that it's a great read as well.

Saffron is just another teenager trying to cope with abusive classmates and uncaring teachers before she follows a strange woman through a portal into another realm. Suddenly she's involved in conspiracies and coups, helped by a collection of exiles and courtiers and queens, in a country about to collapse into civil war. She wants to help her new friends, but she also wants to get home.

The book never shies away from difficult questions or consequences, the emotional trauma of battle or the realities of Saffron's abandoned family, and is all the better for it. Almost inevitably it's the first in a series, but with intelligent, well-realised characters and excellent world building, we can't wait for the second. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i The author's real name is Philippa. She smiled a lot as a baby, so her dad nicknamed her "Foz" after Fozzie Bear.



OBELISK

Bite-size Baxter brilliance

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 18 AUGUST**

320 pages | Hardback/paperback/ebook

► Author Stephen Baxter

► Publisher Gollancz

❖ **The work rate is prodigious.**

Over the past decade or so, Stephen Baxter has turned out at least two books every year. It's an output that calls to mind the Golden Age writers, whose standard of living was dependent on maintaining a certain churn rate.

At which point, we're getting dangerously close to labelling Baxter as a hack when, in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. We think we've made this point before, but while the younger Baxter often didn't nail character in the same way as he nailed dramatising even the most arcane branches of science, this hasn't been true for a while now.

The short stories in Baxter's latest collection provide evidence for this assertion. They cover the

years from 2008-16 and there simply isn't a duffer amongst them. That isn't to say they're perfect. The first story, for instance, "On Chyrse Plain", the tale of a collision in the skies above Mars and its aftermath (one of four based in Baxter's Proxima universe) is almost undone by a rather sentimental paragraph or two at the end. As to why that's a particular pity, it's because (without giving too much away) the bit with the rocket signal is so brilliantly executed.

Elsewhere, there are stories that show's Baxter fondness for alternate history, such as "Fate And The Fire-lance", which details a timeline in which the Byzantine Empire never fell and deserves singling out for its sheer ambition; and the kind of future-fic we associate with the Baxter name.

But if you had to choose anywhere to start, you could do far worse than read a tale filed in the book's contents under "Present Day". "The Pevatron Rats" from 2009, a tale of strange goings-on at a research establishment, is surreal, funny and, at moments, genuinely creepy – especially if you don't like rodents... **Jonathan Wright**

i Baxter will be giving a talk on HG Wells in Woking on 21 September, celebrating the 150th anniversary of Wells' birth.

“Surreal, funny and, at moments, creepy”

Reviews



A WINDOW INTO TIME

Total Recall



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

106 pages | Ebook

► Author **Peter F Hamilton**

► Publisher **Pan Macmillan**

✦ If there's an equivalent to the locked-room mystery within SF, it's surely the time-paradox story. Readers so clearly understand what's going on – the risks of killing your own father in the past and so on – that only a new and novel take on the subgenre is going to hold the attention, which is where the challenge lies.

Enter Peter F Hamilton, whose time-paradox, crime-thriller novella shows us the world from the perspective of a teenager, Julian, who has an eidetic memory. That's unusual enough in itself, but when Julian begins to recall a London finance worker's life in perfect detail too, things start getting really weird.

The story is set in contemporary London and much of it riffs off Julian's problems navigating the world. It's one thing to remember what you see, it's quite another to understand it – and in a sense this is a kind of fantastical take on *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time*.

Whether Hamilton has Mark Haddon's ability to make the mundane seem magical is open to question, but his solution to the potential temporal inconsistencies of time travel is tidy, if a tad tricky. Slight but quietly satisfying. **Jonathan Wright**

1881 story "The Clock That Went Backward" is reputed to be the first temporal paradox used in fiction.

ALSO OUT

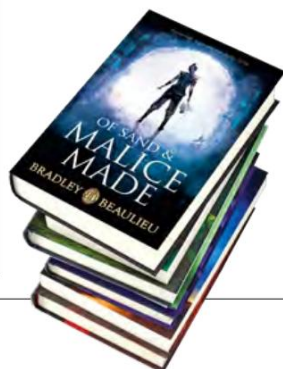
Bradley Beaulieu's epic fantasy series *Song Of The Shattered Sands* continues with **OF SAND AND MALICE MADE** (8

September, Gollancz), a prequel which brings us more of fiery female gladiator Ceda. Our reviewer rather liked opener *Twelve Kings* – though they found the worldbuilding a little bloated. Another series concludes in **THE SPIDER'S WAR** (8

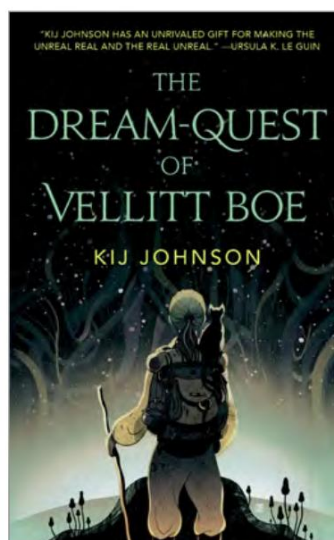
September, Orbit), Daniel Abraham's final *The Dagger And The Coin* book. We lauded saga-opener *The Dragon's Path* – set in a medieval world populated by 13 breeds of humans – as "sharp and evocative".

THE WITCH'S VACUUM CLEANER (25 August, Doubleday Childrens) collects more stories penned by Terry Pratchett in the '60s. Expect fantasy conventions lampooned with some charm; don't expect the wit of Pratchett's mature work. Meanwhile, anthology **SHAKESPEARE VS CTHULHU** (out now,

Snowbooks) sees the likes of Adrian Tchaikovsky and James Lovegrove mashing up the Bard and Lovecraft. Disney obsessives will delight in **THEY DREW AS THEY PLEASED VOLUME TWO** (30 August, Chronicle Books), which includes concept art for the likes of *Fantasia* and *Peter Pan*. Finally: there's an updated edition of Alan Jones's 2004 book *Profondo Argento*. Retitled **DARIO ARGENTO: THE MAN, THE MYTHS & THE MAGIC** (22 August, FAB Press), it features loads of new material on the cult Italian horror director.



STORIES AT THE RIGHT LENGTH



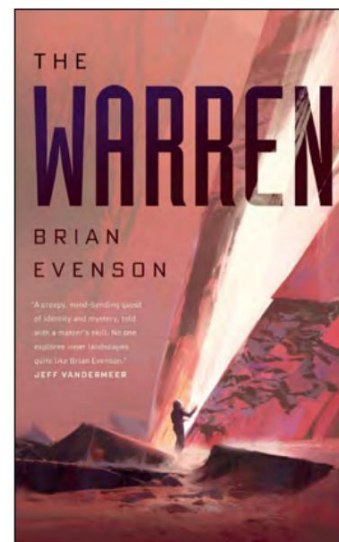
The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe

"A remarkable accomplishment that repays rereading."
—Pamela Sargent, winner of the Nebula Award



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CAPTAIN AMERICA: STEVE ROGERS

Could be a sleeper hit

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Marvel
► Writer Nick Spencer
► Artist Jesus Saiz

ISSUES 1-3 If there's one thing that superhero comics love more than anything else, it's controversy. The right kind of big, unpredictable shock can get people talking and boost awareness – however, as new *Captain America* writer Nick Spencer has discovered, it can also result in getting death threats and being accused

of betraying the legacy of Cap creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

This is all thanks to the dramatic twist in the first issue of Marvel's latest ongoing Captain America title. The cliffhanger ending sees superpowered Steve Rogers confronting bad guy Baron Zemo – but then everything goes sideways when Rogers apparently commits murder and then reveals that he's somehow always been a secret Hydra sleeper agent.

The full (and rather convoluted) explanation arrives in issue two, where it's revealed that the Red Skull has manipulated a sentient Cosmic Cube called Kobik into rewriting Steve Rogers's memories

so that he just *thinks* he's always been a Hydra recruit. It's a button-pushing twist along the lines of the *Superior Spider-Man* saga, where Peter Parker was apparently killed and replaced with Otto Octavius, and the new Hydra-loving Cap looks to be sticking around for a serious amount of time to come.

These first three issues pitch *Captain America* in an interesting direction, with Spencer combining drama and occasionally cheesy action with some darker political territory. This is especially the case with scenes where the Red Skull spouts pro-American, right-wing philosophy not dissimilar to what's being thrown around in the current US Presidential campaign, and the story is bolstered by the fact that Steve Rogers isn't an *entirely* willing Hydra agent, his better nature already establishing itself in subtle ways.

Turning the costumed representative of all that's good in America into a figure who can't be trusted is a challenging concept with plenty of potential, although it's frustrating that such an attention-grabbing narrative hook is tied so heavily into Marvel continuity. Any new readers may find themselves baffled by all the links to the recent *Avengers: Stand-Off* miniseries, but there's still plenty of action to enjoy, along with some sturdy, energetic visuals from artist Jesus Saiz. Marvel's latest shocking twist may not be a slam-dunk in terms of quality, but there's enough intrigue and promise in the idea of a turncoat Steve Rogers to make this new direction one that's worth investigating. **Saxon Bullock**

i In 2003/2005 Nick Spencer twice ran for the Cincinnati City Council, as a candidate for minor party the Charter Committee.



Sadly, she couldn't afford Netflix.

MISTY

Vintage spookiness

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 8 SEPTEMBER**

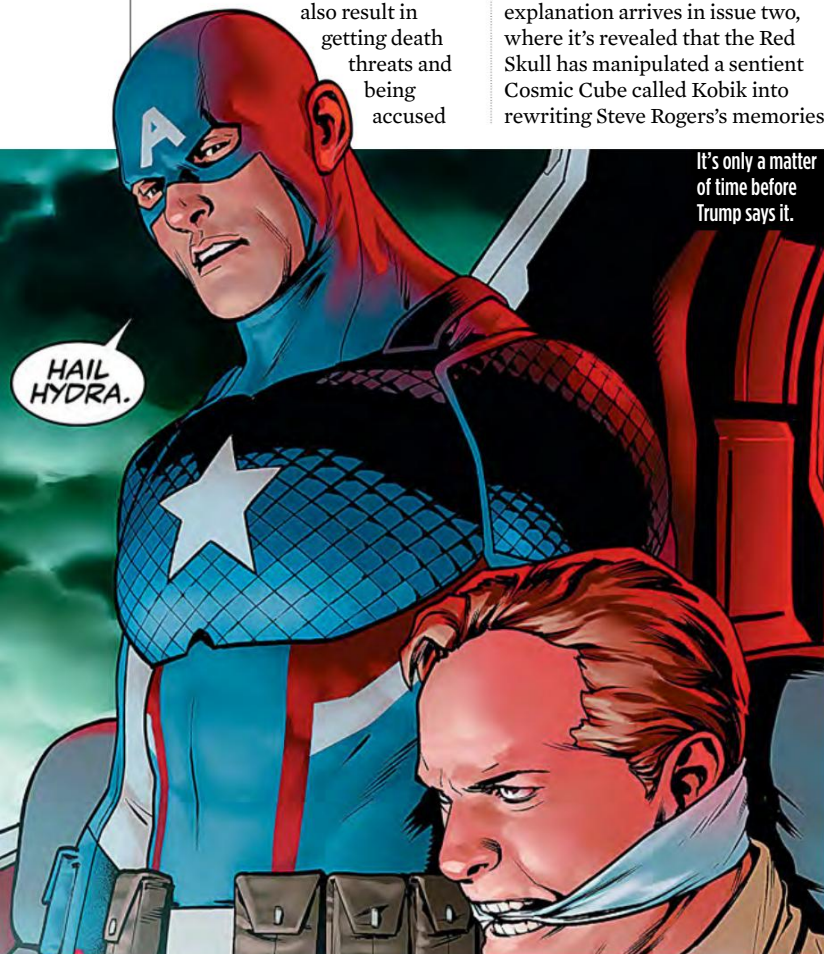
► Publisher Rebellion
► Writers Pat Mills, Malcolm Shaw
► Artists John Armstrong, Brian Delaney, Shirley Bellwood

GRAPHIC NOVEL Part of the same mid-'70s British comic boom that gave us *2000 AD*, *Misty* was a girls' anthology title with its sights set firmly on the spooky and the strange, delivering dark tales of ordinary teens encountering strange phenomena and evil forces. It ran from 1978-80 before being merged with other titles (and ultimately being phased out in 1984), but now Rebellion have packaged together two of the best-known *Misty* sagas.

"Moonchild", written by *2000 AD* co-creator Pat Mills, is a shameless, slightly creaky take on Stephen King's *Carrie*, in which shy Rosemary Black is bullied by her classmates and her harsh mother, until she discovers she possesses telekinetic powers. "The Four Faces Of Eve" is more satisfying, giving us an engaging mystery as amnesiac Eve tries to work out the meaning of her disturbing visions.

The visuals from artists John Armstrong and Brian Delaney are occasionally stiff but also feature strong, impactful moments (especially in "The Four Faces Of Eve"), and while the stories are now more quaintly charming than genuinely spooky, there's still pleasures to be found here for any nostalgia-inclined comics fans. **Saxon Bullock**

i According to Pat Mills, the title of *Misty* was inspired by the 1971 Clint Eastwood thriller *Play Misty For Me*.





Everyone dreaded Granny's kisses.

HOUSE OF PENANCE



Print the legend



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **Dark Horse Comics**

► Writer **Peter J Tomasi**

► Artist **Ian Bertram**

ISSUES 1-4 This is a true story, sort of. Sarah Winchester, heir to half of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, spent 38 years continuously expanding her mansion, to both house and drown out the spirits of everyone killed by Winchester rifles. At least, that's the legend, and while it was probably embellished over the years, it's that version which Peter J Tomasi and Ian Bertram have run with for this superb horror comic.

The legend is already a fine piece of gothic narrative – a woman in fear of the past builds a labyrinthine house filled with redundant staircases – and the book gets full value out of it. Sarah, though quite mad, is a sympathetic heroine, desperate to make amends but also escape her fate, and her relationship with one of the labourers is touchingly portrayed.

Bertram's artwork has an uneasy sense of instability and decay, but most striking are the blood-worms which writhe through floorboards and coil around necks, invisible to the characters. The sense that Sarah walks in blood everywhere she goes is powerfully conveyed. There are two issues left at the time of writing – wherever this goes, it's going to get worse.

Eddie Robson

i Supernatural creator Eric Kripke says the house partially inspired him to give Sam and Dean the surname Winchester.



A rumble.
In a jungle.

BLACK PANTHER

Cat People



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **Marvel Comics**

► Writer **Ta-Nehisi Coates**

► Artist **Brian Stelfreeze**

ISSUES 1-4 **Black Panther is one** of those Marvel stalwarts who's struggled to command his own regular title. But after Chadwick Boseman's electric performance as the Wakandan monarch-turned-Avenger in *Civil War*, the time is ripe for a relaunch. And Marvel pulled off a coup securing Ta-Nehisi Coates, a renowned author who's written about social issues, particularly from an African-American perspective, for publications such as *The Atlantic*.

The first four instalments (11 are planned) are perhaps best read as a whole, as Coates adopts a measured pace, even interspersing the thankfully not-too-infrequent

action scenes with a university debate about the theories of English philosopher John Locke.

If anything, opening arc "A Nation Under Our Feet" is too beholden to past continuity, with the first issue alluding to Black Panther's battles with Namor in *The Avengers*. Significantly, the majority of the other protagonists are women, including T'Challa's apparently not-quite-so-dead sister Shuri and main adversaries the Midnight Angels. Former members of all-female Royal Guard the Dora Milaje, they rebel after Queen Ramonda stubbornly refuses to sanction one of them taking the law into their own hands, sparking a political crisis.

Veteran artist Brian Stelfreeze is the perfect foil for the inexperienced Coates, bringing a manga-esque edge to the distinctive Wakandan technology, so it's a shame that Chris Sprouse replaces him from #5. But this remains a nuanced, engaging take on a classic character that this time should definitely last the distance. **Stephen Jewell**

i Companion series *World Of Wakanda*, starts in November. Co-written by Roxanne Gay, it centres on the Midnight Angels.

“A nuanced, engaging take on a classic character”



Why walk the dog when you can drive?

DREAM GANG

Jung At Heart



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **Dark Horse Comics**

► Writer/artist **Brendan McCarthy**

GRAPHIC NOVEL **Brendan**

McCarthy may be better known now for co-writing and designing *Mad Max: Fury Road* than for his equally impressive work on series such as *2000 AD's Sooner Or Later*; comics' loss is movies' gain.

Originally serialised in *Dark Horse Presents*, *Dream Gang's* episodic nature harks back to *Strange Days*, his seminal '80s anthology with Peter Milligan and the late Brett Ewins. It centres on a man who's transformed while he sleeps into the blue-skinned, Bowie-esque dream avatar Dream Voyager, and inducted into the surreal ranks of a psychic super-team. It's pretty heady stuff, with McCarthy channelling Carl Jung's theories as well as Steve Ditko's original Doctor Strange.

Indeed, McCarthy owes such a debt to Ditko that the story features a fictional comic by the Spider-Man co-creator and fellow '60s pioneers Jack Kirby and Carmine Infantino. There are also wry nods to The Beatles, and Love's 1967 album *Forever Changes*.

There's a pulpy simplicity to the script. The real draw is McCarthy's phantasmagorical art, vividly coloured by Len O'Grady, which also references European masters like Moebius and Druillet. Mind-bending bedtime reading from a true visionary. **Stephen Jewell**

i McCarthy first pitched a different version of the tale to Vertigo in the '90s. Back then it was called *Z-Men*.

LEGO STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

Bricks, blasters and BB-8

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Reviewed on PS4

► Also on XO, Wii U, PC, PS3, 360, PS Vita, 3DS, Mobile

► Publisher Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment

VIDEOGAME The *Lego* series may have hitched its wagon to any number of world-famous franchises in the last decade, but George Lucas's pulpy sci-fi universe – with its recognisable heroes, villains, locations and vehicles – remains the perfect partner for *Lego*. Whether it's the chrome detailing on Kylo Ren's helmet or the snowy surface of Starkiller Base, everything looks as

you remember from the movie – albeit with a few more studs.

In-between ooh-ing and ahh-ing at these details, however, you'll partake in much the same blend of gentle platforming and baddie-brawling that's been driving the franchise for years now, pausing only to Hoover up the swathes of collectables that litter every level.

It would, however, be unfair to claim that *The Force Awakens* delivers nothing new. Take the Blaster Battle sections, for instance, which eschew platforming and brawling in favour of waist-high walls and cover-shooting mechanics. For all their cinematic flair, though, these feel a little lightweight and loose.

We weren't expecting *Lego Gears Of War*, but these stylish segments are disappointingly simplistic.

The game's other significant innovation – Multi-Builds – is much more successful. This novel mechanic lets you assemble bouncing blocks of highlighted *Lego* into a variety of different objects, introducing a degree of choice to the building process.

The inclusion of a smattering of original "bridge missions" – which portray events between *Return Of The Jedi* and *The Force Awakens* – alongside the 10 main story missions will no doubt delight lore

“It's about fun as much as anything else”

junkies, although they're a more reliable source of slapstick side-plots than showstopping canonical revelations.

These bridge stages also tend to rely much more heavily on original dialogue, which sees the movie cast reprising their roles. It's a shame that this new voicework can sit rather awkwardly alongside audio tracks that have been ripped directly from the movie, with a noticeable discrepancy in sound.

But *Lego Star Wars* is about unabashed fun as much as anything else, and on that front it delivers handsomely. Series stalwarts won't find anything revolutionary, but this is an admirable demonstration of the appeal of the *Star Wars* universe and *Lego* blocks, whatever your age. **James Nouch**

i Unlockable characters include JJ Abrams – who has a movie camera on his back – and Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy.



BAKER'S END: THE KING OF CATS

Tom turned up to 10

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 2 SEPTEMBER**

63 minutes | CD/download

► Publisher Bafflegab Productions

AUDIO DRAMA Tom Baker's obsession with death (this is a man who had the inscription carved on his gravestone decades ago) and insatiable appetite for tall stories combine in this demented comedy – the first in a bi-monthly series – set during the former Time Lord's funeral in the peculiar hamlet of Happenstance.

Baker plays himself, accompanied by *Doctor Who* grande dame Katy Manning as an ex-colleague drawn into the mystery of how the teatime telly legend met his sticky end. Was he really run over by the TV detector van? Or, as some say, did he suffer a fatal fall while climbing naked on the roof of the village Post Office-cum-Mini Mart?

Entirely built around the actor's larger-than-life reputation, this is Baker with no filter, channelling the spirit of *The Goons* with a performance so large you can see it from Gallifrey. The presence of the equally fanciful Paul Mags on script duties, meanwhile, results in a critical mass of whimsy involving crazed hurdy-gurdy players, twerking pensioners and grannies with weaponised bosoms.

“It was like we'd taken leave of our senses,” says Manning's character at one point. Well quite. **Paul Kirkley**

i Mags previously wrote the Baker-starring *Hornets' Nest*, *Demon Quest* and *Serpent Crest* series for BBC Audio.





Targeting the internet or spooks?

GHOSTBUSTERS

Won't make you feel good



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Reviewed on PS4

► Also on XO, PC

► Publisher Activision

VIDEOGAME It was once

accepted wisdom among gamers that movie tie-ins were almost always terrible. But in recent years, the reputation of licensed games has recovered somewhat.

The *Ghostbusters* videogame, however, represents a return to the bad old days. While its central twin-stick shooting gameplay might be best described as flavourless but functional, this workaday core is dragged down by shoddy, threadbare presentation.

Your four-person spook squad is dispatched to a stage with a mandate to purge the paranormal. In practice, this means shooting lightweight projectiles at swarms of palette-swapped spectres, as you battle through each overlong level. Occasionally, you'll have to whip out your Proton Pack to dispatch an especially fierce phantom.

This gameplay loop – which often repeats dozens of times within a single, interminable stage – never proves especially thrilling nor remotely funny. In fact, the grenade-spamming, circle-strafting action is so basic and untaxing that we were left with enough unoccupied grey matter to dwell on the disappointment generated by a game that so singularly fails to reproduce the spirit of its source material. **James Nouch**

i The first *Ghostbusters* game, in 1984, was made in six weeks by adapting a part-developed game called *Car Wars*.



The exhibition has a wide variety of *Trek* costumes.

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EXHIBITION Blackpool famously

played host to two *Doctor Who* exhibitions – one in the '70s and '80s, and another in the 2000s. Some *Who* fans may see it as an affront to nature that the exact same space now plays host to a *Star Trek* exhibition – but we're pleased the tradition of SF attractions in the town continues.

Tying in with the 50th anniversary of *Trek*, it features artefacts from throughout the franchise. There's not a huge amount from the original series, simply because so little of it survives – but it does, wonderfully, include a Tribble. There's a huge array of costumes, taking in Worf's naval uniform from *Generations*, one of Spock's headbands from *The Voyage Home*, and a brilliant curio – an unused costume made for the abandoned *Phase II* series of the late '70s.

The best-assembled part of the exhibition brings together a selection of props which have been particularly prescient and/or influential on real-life technology – most strikingly, *Next Gen*-era props that look almost exactly like a modern laptop and USB stick. This is immediately followed by a recreation of the original series bridge set, where you can (and inevitably will) sit and have your picture taken in Kirk's chair. It wasn't quite complete when we visited, but when finished it'll include interactive elements – you can download an app which, excitingly, will enable you to stand on a recreation of the transporter while a friend videos you being beamed up.

The inventiveness of the design work on *Trek* down the years means it easily supports this kind of exhibition, which will take you about an hour to get round. *Star Wars* next, Blackpool? **Eddie Robson**

i From 2 September Blackpool will have a new *Star Trek* light feature on the Golden Mile, featuring various captains.



CLASSIC DOCTORS, NEW MONSTERS Vol One

When eras collide



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

275 minutes | CD/download

► Publisher Big Finish

AUDIO DRAMA Big Finish has

been producing *Doctor Who* audio drama for 17 years now, making it tricky for newcomers to know where to start.

However, there are some useful jumping-on-points; the latest arrives via this box set, which pitches four classic Doctors against a selection of new series adversaries.

Over a quartet of self-contained one-hour episodes, the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Doctors battle the Weeping Angels, the Judoon, the Sycorax and the Sontarans. With each Doctor flying solo, continuity is kept to a minimum, and every story aims to capture its respective Doctor's character while also channeling the spirit of the show's modern incarnation.

There are occasional missteps – the Sixth Doctor's rambling escapade with the Judoon being the main weak link – but there's also plenty of rousing thrills and adventure. Surprisingly, the most solid episode turns out to be the reappearance of the warlike Sycorax from 2005's "The Christmas Invasion". Overall it's a strong experiment that throws together two eras of the show with satisfying results.

Saxon Bullock

i The Angels cast includes Sacha Dhawan – Waris Hussein in biodrama *An Adventure In Space And Time*.



COLLECTABLES

What we've been playing with this month

1 Is this **Harry Potter coffee mug** (FPI price £8.99; product code DS873) racist? As humans with no magical ability, we take offence to being labelled "Muggles" – especially since the term's being used here as a substitute for the word "bastard". Why are we being blamed for "getting people down"? It's hate speech! We should start a petition.

A parliamentary enquiry is called for. Or maybe we'll just have a cup of tea instead. Yes, that's simplest.

2 The needle on the cuteness dial lurches perilously into the red with Funko's girl-friendly new range of **Rock Candy vinyl figures** (FPI price £10.99 each; product codes F2291, F2292, F2293, F2294, F2295,

F2296), but these daredevil dames could still kick your ass (well, they could if they weren't dinky 5" statuettes but listen, empowerment). The female frontline of the DCU includes Batgirls both classic and 2015 style, Harley Quinn in trad jester mode, Supergirl, classic Wonder Woman and her Gadotastic *Batman V Superman* incarnation.

3 This **Batman coaster set** from Half Moon Bay (FPI price £4.99; product code D5732) is one of the neatest we've seen, for two reasons. Firstly, it uses original comics covers from the '60s, '70s and '80s (specifically *Batman* issue 251 and *Detective Comics* 280, 395 and 566) – all that's missing's the Comics Code Authority logo. Secondly, they're generously proportioned (15cm by 10.5cm) – something you welcome when trying to negotiate a successful bottle-to-coaster landing after your seventh beer.

4 It's a cultural reference that dates us, but it has to be said: the Wilson Fisk component of this range of

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Reviews



Daredevil Dorbz (FPI price £8.49 each; product codes D6282, D6284, D6285, D6283) looks more like '70s cartoon icon Bod than Vincent D'Onofrio's crime boss. The three jolly incarnations of Matt Murdock (in civilian, "masked vigilante" and full-on Man Without Fear garb) are better likenesses – good news for Daredevil fans, not so much for Bod completists still awaiting that Aunt Flo figure.

5 So far we've barely glimpsed the **Twelfth Doctor's second sonic screwdriver** (FPI price £14.99; product code F2372) on screen. The design's in tune with the TARDIS exterior, with navy blue

colouring and a light-up section bringing to mind the Police Box windows. Pleasingly, it has more lights and sound combos than previous models – four in all, activated by pushing an "activator" button at thumb level up or down, either once or twice. The high-pitched pulsing of "double up" is our favourite – slap a breakbeat on it and you'd have a real head-nodder.

6 Jabba's pet Kowakian monkey lizard didn't look this cute when he was chewing out C-3PO's eye on the gangster's Sail Barge... This **Salacious Crumb talking plush** (FPI price £14.99; product code C7429) is more Mogwai than

Gremlin, a cuddly Fraggles-like critter you'd happily give to your kids to play with – if only he didn't make a godawful cackle every time they give him a cuddle. You have been warned.

7 Sith artefacts are extremely collectable these days, and perhaps none more so than this **Darth Vader lightsaber handle cheese grater** (FPI price £9.99; product code D5949), which surely came in handy in the Death Star kitchen. Yes, the sinister Force cult may have spurned the peaceful ways of the Jedi in favour of using their abilities to grasp for power, but they flippin' loved a bit of cheddar sprinkled on top of their space bolognese. ●

THINGS TO COME

More goodies on their way soon



ULTIMATE ASH

◆ *Evil Dead 2* 7" action figures are nothing new, but NECA's new version of Bruce Campbell's hero features fully articulated legs and loads of accessories, including swappable regular/possessed Ash heads, and choices of weapons and hands.



BB-8 WAFFLE MAKER

◆ Not the first *Star Wars* waffle maker – Darth Vader, Stormtrooper and Death Star ones already exist – but the droid-shaped goodies it produces are certainly the cutest. It has five temperature settings so you can brown him to your taste.



PROTEUS MODEL KIT

◆ Celebrate the 50th anniversary of miniaturised adventure *Fantastic Voyage* by building the submarine from the film! Moebius Models' plastic kit is 1:32 scale, with a fully detailed interior and removable top. No Raquel Welch onboard.

Photography by Olly Curtis



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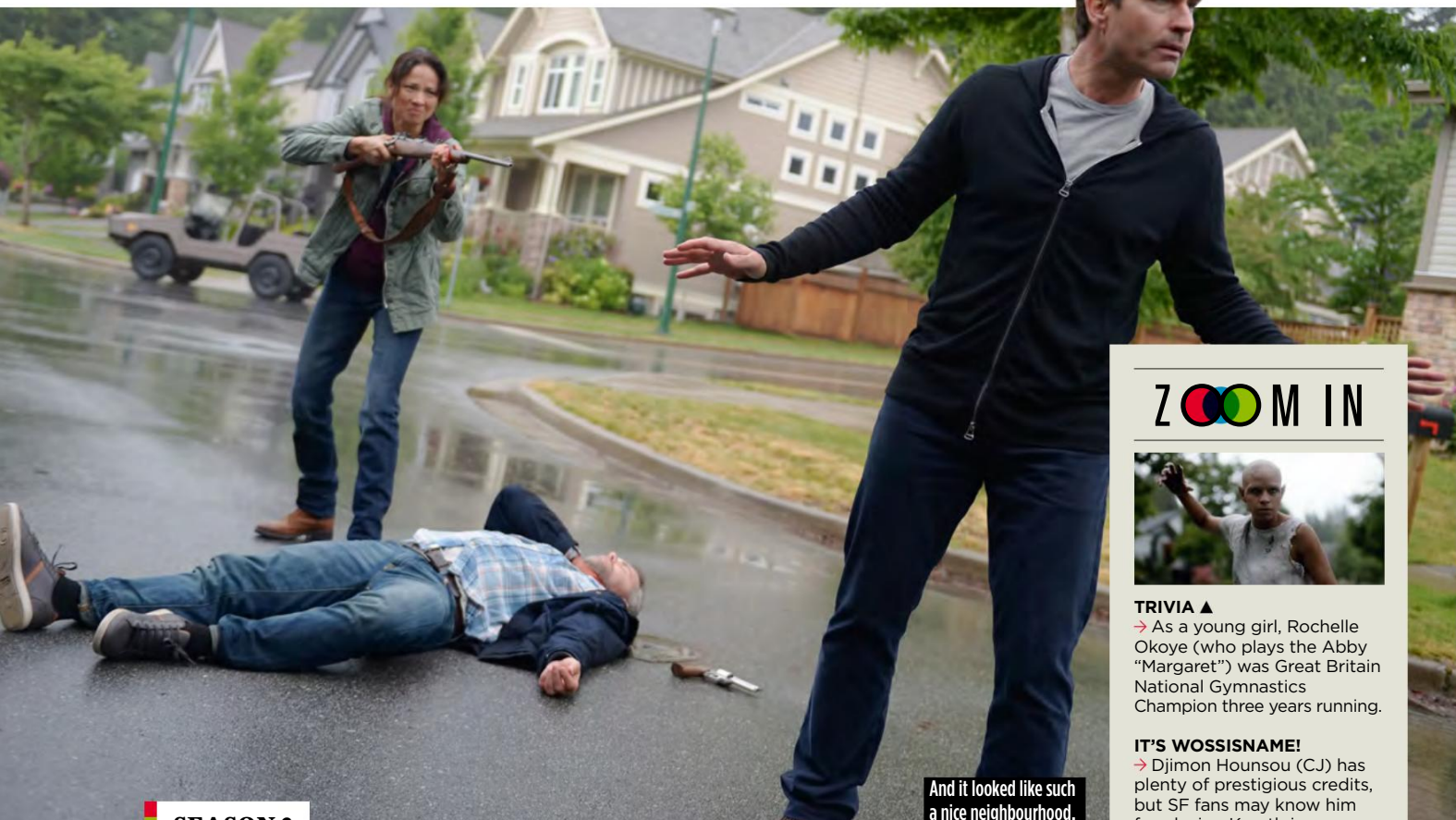


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SEASON 2

WAYWARD PINES

Struggles to find its way

► **UK Broadcast** Fox, finished
► **US Broadcast** Fox, finished
► **Episodes Reviewed** 2.01-2.10

🔴 **How do you continue an** “event series” after you’ve blown the big secret, killed off the lead, and offed the antagonist? This rather tricky situation was exactly the one facing *Wayward Pines*’ incoming showrunner. Unfortunately few of the solutions devised for this second run work all that well.

Not seen the first series? Then clear off and catch up – it’s well worth watching, and it’s impossible to discuss season two

without spraying spoilers. Still with us? Then you’ll be aware that halfway through season one it was revealed that the titular small town is all that survives of humanity hundreds of years in the future, home to both volunteers and people abducted and placed in cryogenic suspension against their will – like Matt Dillon’s Secret Service agent Ethan Burke.

With season one’s finale disposing of both Burke and the town’s creator David Pilcher (Toby Jones), season two defrosts a new protagonist: surgeon Dr Theo Yedlin (Jason Patric). Thankfully, the show doesn’t waste time

making him play guessing games for long, with the reality of *Wayward Pines* laid out for Yedlin in episode two by Pilcher’s young heir Jason, who now rules the town with an iron fist – but always with tears welling up in his eyes, because hey, fascists can still be sensitive and dreamy, right? This boy-band Oswald Mosley seems like a transparent attempt to inject the show with teen appeal, and makes for a pretty implausible ruler. You keep hoping Yedlin will clip him round the ear and send him to his room.

With no mystery to solve, how to keep the viewers occupied?

ZOOM IN



TRIVIA ▲

→ As a young girl, Rochelle Okoye (who plays the Abby “Margaret”) was Great Britain National Gymnastics Champion three years running.

IT’S WOSSISNAME!

→ Djimon Hounsou (CJ) has plenty of prestigious credits, but SF fans may know him for playing Korath in *Guardians Of The Galaxy*.

BEST EPISODE

→ “Time Will Tell” (2.07) makes clever, poignant use of flashbacks (showing CJ waking up every two decades to make checks) and has some interesting revelations about the Abbies.

BEST MOMENT

→ When Margaret works out how to unlock her cage, with shocking results... (2.07).

COMEDY HIGHLIGHT ▼

→ Yedlin’s kooky receptionist Arlene (Siobhan Fallon Hogan), forever broadcasting her sexual availability to the good doctor – it’s not subtle (and tonally feels out of place) but it’s amusing.





Well, flashbacks come in handy. On the plus side, this means more Toby Jones – always a good thing. But they tend to answer questions no one particularly cared to ask, such as “Who was the architect of Wayward Pines?” Other characters left standing at the end of season one – like Burke’s wife, his son, and former colleague Kate – also return, but are briskly dispensed with. Who knows whether the belated commissioning of a second season meant actors had already committed to other projects, or whether on being offered the gig they spluttered, “Write me out quickly, this sounds pretty pointless”... but you wouldn’t be too surprised if it was the latter.

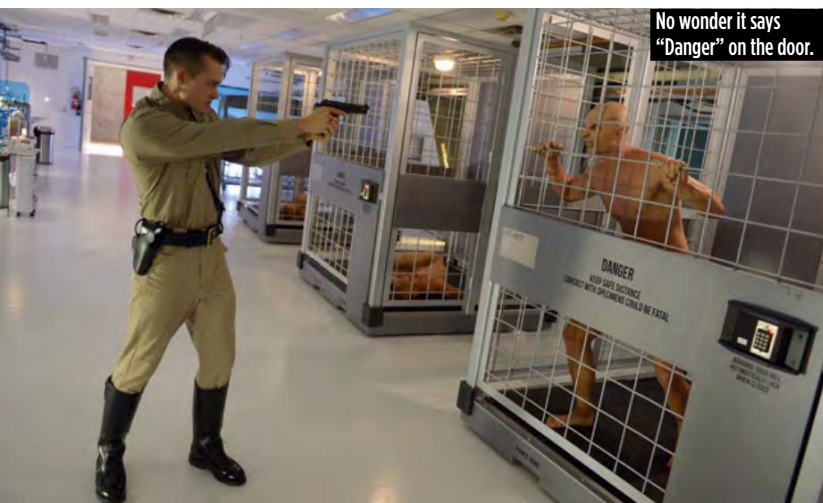
That yawning narrative gap is also filled by jamming it full of soap. So Yedlin has to deal with the fact that his wife has found a new lover, while other characters discover they’re gay, or – in the season’s most bat’s-arse development – find out that they’re related. You may find yourself sarcastically imitating an *EastEnders* cliffhanger drum roll.

The one path taken which has

“Often seems to be struggling to find a reason to exist”

some success is expanding the show’s mythology by taking a closer look at the society of the mutated “Abbies” who live outside the town’s walls. After a rarely-seen female Abby is captured, it’s discovered that she’s a leader, is intelligent, and has telepathic abilities. But ultimately this story thread doesn’t really go anywhere. Similarly, while Yedlin’s character darkens towards the end, this evolution comes about too late to be explored in any great depth.

It all makes for a season which is intermittently entertaining, but often seems to be struggling to find a reason to exist. Next time the alarm goes off for humanity to awake, maybe it’d be best to hit the snooze button. **Ian Berriman**



BEAR

Person Of Interest's calculating canine is a true doggy hero

► UK Broadcast TBC, Channel 5 ► US Broadcast Finished, CBS

Yes, this month our Best

In Show is actually a dog. While this does look as though we’re scraping the barrel somewhat, in fact we have some very good reasons as to why Bear deserves to be singled out – and if you watch *Person Of Interest*, chances are you’re already on our side here.

Bear isn’t an ordinary dog, see. He’s a military canine, a trained killer, able to interpret and carry out complex commands at just a couple of words from his trainer – as long as the commands are in Dutch. Taken from his original owners by a nasty gang, Bear first appeared in the season two premiere episode, when Reese realised what an asset he was and got the dog to turn on the gang with one command.

After this, Bear was an invaluable part of the team. He helped to get a nervous Harold Finch back into the outside world after suffering from panic attacks. He went

undercover with Reese. He disarmed bad guys, kept an eye on jumpy victims our heroes were trying to protect, helped to soften otherwise unfeeling characters and regularly saved lives. In one episode, Bear knew to fetch a fire extinguisher when Finch asked for it, thus saving both their lives – who trained him to do *that*? Good dog.

Bear was played for two seasons by a Belgian Malinois named Graubaer’s Boker, a dog as well-trained as his on-screen counterpart (in 2014 he won the World Championship for Utility Dogs, the equivalent of a doggy Olympic gold medal). Later, Bear was portrayed by dogs named Lola and Gotcha. Now the show has finished, we’ll miss seeing the adventures of these furry guys – but in our heads, Bear is off helping people, like a formidable Lassie who won’t take any of your human shit.

Jayne Nelson

That hat's worth losing an "N" for.



SEASON 1

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Scary *Poldark* (only it's not scary...)

► UK Broadcast BBC One, finished
► Episodes Reviewed 1.01-1.06

❖ You could spend an entire episode of *The Living And The Dead* playing "I Spy". There's a tiny bit of *The Wicker Man* here. A smidge of *Don't Look Now* there. A ghostly homage to *Sapphire & Steel* here; the creaky corridors of *The Woman In Black* there; a hint of *Witchfinder General* crossed with a glimmer of *Life On Mars*...

The latter, of course, makes sense when you note that *Mars/Ashes To Ashes* writer Ashley Pharoah came up with this spooky supernatural drama, and the little moments that do recall those shows work fantastically well: particularly in the first episode's ending, which sees 19th-century farmer Nathan Appleby (Colin

Morgan) stumbling across the ghost of a young woman in his hallway who's holding a glowing iPad. Jaw? Meet floor.

The show's biggest influence, however, is undoubtedly *Poldark*. While that soaring BBC success centred largely on Aidan Turner's hair blowing in the breeze on a Cornish clifftop, here we have Colin Morgan's impressive barnet-and-beard combo ruffling in the breeze in a Somerset wheat field. There are blue summer skies, cheerful peasants tilling the land and even shots of Morgan with his top off. Unlike *Poldark*, however, *The Living And The Dead* throws in possessions, ghosts, freakish murders, witch-dunking and even time travel. It's a brave move from Auntie Beeb, who last dabbled with prime-time magic with *Jonathan*

Strange & Mr Norrell and got burnt by the ratings, but everybody likes a good horror series, right?

The problem is that it's actually *not that scary*. There's only so many times someone can wander into a dark room with a lamp looking for a noise, and what scares there are disappear from the screen so quickly, it's as though the editor got impatient for their tea break. After a promising start, by the time you get to the dreadfully, insultingly clichéd "killer lesbian" tale in episode four, you're losing the plot.

Still, an intriguing final episode regains a lot of lost ground, and nobody can deny that Nathan Appleby could give *Poldark* a run for his money in the "attractive brooding" stakes. Just don't expect to be frightened. **Jayne Nelson**

ZOOM IN



BEST EPISODE ▲

→ Episode three sees Nathan fighting to unravel why a ghost has cursed the village's harvest, while his wife, Charlotte, fixes the curse with science. Supernatural goings-on and agricultural education all in one!

TRIVIA

→ The similarities aren't just superficial: *The Living And The Dead* and *Poldark* actually share a producer, Eliza Mellor.

WORST MOMENT

→ The first episode sees a farmer lure two horses with an apple so they run over him with their plough. It's supposed to be dramatic but you're just left scratching your head at how silly it is.

THE FUTURE?

→ The finale seems strangely open-ended. Will there be a series two? "I've got unfinished business with these two, I think," says Ashley Pharoah of the show's central couple.

DID YOU SPOT? ▼

→ The red coat worn by the ghost from the future resembles the little girl's coat in *Don't Look Now* - as does Nathan's son drowning.





LINE UP

The month's most quotable dialogue

WAVERLY EARP

"Wanna slip into something more comfy, huh? Like a coma?"

Wynonna Earp,
Episode 1.01



DEBLANC

"If by baby you mean the most powerful entity ever known, the singular force that could shift the balance of power and threaten all of creation, then yeah, it's a baby."

PREACHER,
Episode 1.06



BRIANNA

"So you believe she travelled 200 years into the past? Through a stone?"

ROGER

"It's not important if I believe it. She believes it. I'm just saying, we need to keep an open mind."



BRIANNA

"How about we keep an open tab instead?"

Outlander,
Episode 2.13



DUSTIN

"Why are you keeping this curiosity door locked?"

Stranger Things,
Episode 1.07



SCRIPT EASE

A TV season distilled

SEASON 2

12 MONKEYS

Tying time in knots...



► UK Broadcast Syfy, finished

► US Broadcast Syfy, finished

► Episodes Reviewed 2.01-2.11

VOICEOVER

Previously on *12 Monkeys*... it was a bit like the film but not much. It was more like *Continuum* without the cool suit, or *The Terminator* with a plague instead of a techno-apocalypse. Lots of stuff happened that'll make no sense condensed into a "previously on" segment, so all you really need to know is scientists in a bleak future keep sending James Cole back into the past to try to prevent a plague but he keeps making a pig's ear of it. And there are some baddies creating an alternate future where forests are red. A mad girl in the past called Jennifer wants to be Harley Quinn but turns into Helena

Bonham Carter in the future. And everybody argues. Continually.

COLE

I'm stuck in the past.

CASSIE

I'm stuck in the future.

COLE

I got it worse.

CASSIE

No. I got it worse. Hey, how come we're arguing even when we're separated by a century?

DR JONES

Hang on, time's changed and I suddenly have a husband I never knew about. That's awkward.

CASSIE

While we're waiting I'll have a fling with the dodgy paramilitary guy guarding the base

and go all badass like Sarah Connor...

DR JONES

Psst... best not to draw too many parallels.

Meanwhile, in the past...

COLE

Ramse, you may have betrayed us all by selling out to bad guys to save your son, but we're still best buds, yeah?

RAMSE

Yeah. No. Probably. Let's face it, we'll all be swapping allegiances on a weekly basis for the rest of the season, so let's just wrap up the plague plot quickly and get on with this season's arc.

JENNIFER

I'm mad me! Turnip?

COLE

No thanks. Plague?

JENNIFER

Here you go. Can I help kill baddies now?

The baddies carry on trying to create their red forest.

Cole bounces around in time with whoever he's arguing with the least that week. There's a really dull bottle episode and a fantastic *Groundhog Day* one. Allegiances shift weekly. There are surreal druggy dream sequences. The machine breaks down regularly at dramatic moments.

DR JONES

Oh my husband's died, but now I seem to have a daughter.

COLE

Yeah, I saved her in the past and she been secretly brought up by Helena Bonham Carter.

DR JONES

Isn't time travel wonderful?

Dr Jones vanishes in a puff of time paradox...

Dave Golder



SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest and strangest moments from the month in TV



COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Preacher's Meat & Power boss Odin Quincannon goes to extreme lengths to perfect his Ood costume in time for Comic-Con.



THEORY OF THE MONTH

The scene in *Stranger Things* that proved the entire series did, in fact, take place inside a *Star Trek* holodeck.



SPORTING TRIUMPH OF THE MONTH

The Russian Olympic team suspect the other swimmers may have lied about where the lockers are in *Dark Matter*.



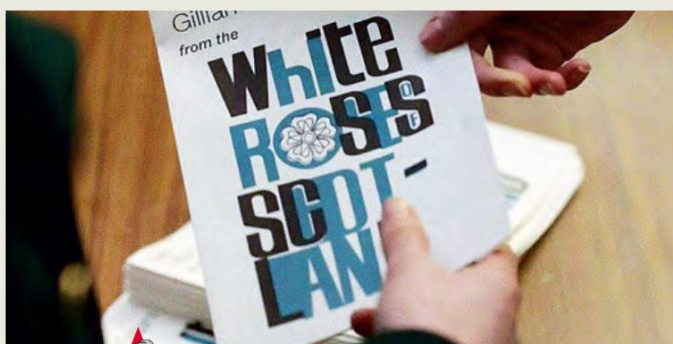
SELFIE OF THE MONTH

In *Mr Robot*, the fsociety's agenda turns out to be a big load of bollocks.



BELATED SEQUEL OF THE MONTH

Who'd have guessed that the Fonz would grow up to be in a *Mork & Mindy* revival called *Henry Zipzer* for CBBC?



DISRESPECTFUL TYPOGRAPHY OF THE MONTH

In *Outlander*, what self-respecting Scottish nationalist would produce a pamphlet that split the name of their country across two lines?



FAMILY PORTRAIT OF THE MONTH

Not being rude, but we think their parents may have been just a little too closely related in *Mr Robot*...



SUPERMODELS OF THE MONTH

Preacher's Cass and Jesse wait for the Lynx effect to kick in.



DELICACY OF THE MONTH

Arya serves a finger buffet in *Game Of Thrones*.



GADGET OF THE MONTH

Novelty queuing-ticket dispenser in *Wynonna Earp*.

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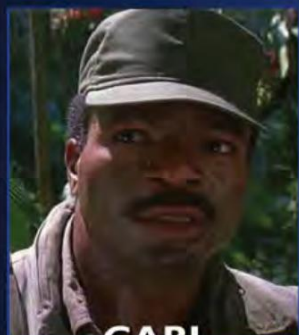
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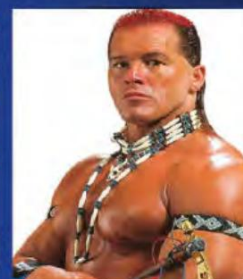
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SPIN-OFFS

In honour of *Fear The Walking Dead*, time to test your spin-off nous

Quizmaster: Richard Edwards, Editor

QUESTION 1

In *Transformers* the two main factions are the Autobots and Decepticons. What are their equivalents in spin-off *Beast Wars*?

QUESTION 2 PICTURE QUESTION

He-Man protects Eternia from Skeletor and his goons. On which planet is his twin sister, She-Ra, based?

QUESTION 3

Which long-running sitcom was *Mork & Mindy* a spin-off from?

QUESTION 4

What's the name of the main spaceship in *Babylon 5* follow-up *Crusade*?

QUESTION 5 PICTURE QUESTION

James Marsters, a veteran of *Buffy* companion show *Angel*, also did the spin-off thing with *Torchwood*. Name the character he played.

QUESTION 6

Which famous fictional realm was the setting for the *Once Upon A Time* spin-off that featured *Being Human*'s Michael Socha and lasted a single season?

QUESTION 7

From what animated series (that also spawned a live-action movie) is *The Legend Of Korra* a spin-off?

QUESTION 8 PICTURE QUESTION

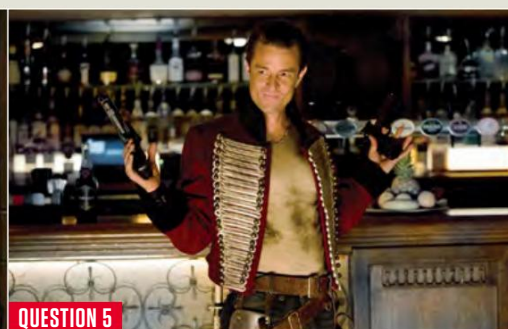
In the *Harry Potter* universe, who's the author of *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*? (He's the main character in the upcoming movie.)

QUESTION 9

Which semi-regular *Danger Mouse* villain went on to front his own cartoon series?



QUESTION 2



QUESTION 5



QUESTION 8



QUESTION 14

QUESTION 10

Which member of the original *Star Trek* cast appeared briefly in "Encounter At Farpoint", the first ever episode of *The Next Generation*?

QUESTION 11

What's the name of the morally questionable supernatural law firm in *Angel*?

QUESTION 12

Ray "The Atom" Palmer debuted in *Arrow*, before becoming one of the stars of *Legends Of Tomorrow*. Who plays him?

QUESTION 13

In which DC character's comics did occult detective John Constantine (co-created by Alan Moore) make his first appearance?



QUESTION 16

Luke Pasqualino played the young William Adama in one-off *Battlestar Galactica* prequel *Blood & Chrome*. In which BBC action drama does he star?

QUESTION 14 PICTURE QUESTION

Name this trapped-in-the-'80s character.

QUESTION 15

What was the name of the short-lived follow-up to the original *Battlestar Galactica*, in which the *Galactica* finally made it to Earth?

QUESTION 17

In which TV show did Xena: Warrior Princess make her first appearance?

QUESTION 18

In what US city is *The Vampire Diaries* spin-off *The Originals* set?

QUESTION 19

In which *Stargate* spin-off were the Wraith the principal antagonists?

QUESTION 20

The X-Files' Lone Gunmen briefly had their own series. Can you name the trio?

Answers
1 Maximals and Predacons 2 Etheria 3 Happy Days 4 Excalibur 5 Captain John Hart 6 Wonderland 7 Avatar: The Last Airbender 8 Newt Scamander 9 Count Dooku 10 DeForest Kelley (Dr McCoy) 11 Wolfram & Hart 12 Brandon Routh 13 Swamp Thing 14 DI Alex Drake (Ashes To Ashes) 15 Galactica 1980 16 The Musketeers 17 Hercules: The Legendary Journeys 18 New Orleans 19 Stargate Atlantis 20 Langly, Frohike and Byers

How did you do?

How do you compare with non-sci-fi spin-offs?



→ 0-5
Holby City



→ 6-10
Joey



→ 11-15
American Dad!



→ 16-19
Better Call Saul



→ 20
Frasier



STAR WARS SOUND EFFECTS

Richard Edwards, Editor

The *Star Wars* movies are usually celebrated for their groundbreaking visuals – and rightly so. But *Star Wars* isn't just about what you see. In fact, even watching *Star Wars* with your eyes closed is an incredibly evocative experience that instantly transports you to a certain galaxy far, far away.

A big part of that is John Williams's score, that immortal succession of some of the most memorable movie music ever recorded. But even more important, I reckon, are the sound effects. Has there ever been another film series where noises have been given such a big role?

The hum of a lightsaber. The scream of a TIE fighter. Darth Vader's mechanical breathing. The stomp of an AT-AT... Just hearing them in isolation is enough to awaken that warm, fuzzy *Star Wars* part of your brain – even if they've simply been commandeered to tell someone a text message has arrived. And amazingly, nearly 40 years on, they still feel original and fresh. They've burrowed their way into our collective aural



pathways in a way that perhaps only the TARDIS and transporters from the original *Star Trek* can match.

The props for that go to legendary sound designer Ben Burtt, possibly the only member of his profession that the average movie fan could take a shot at naming. Rather than following the '60s and '70s convention of playing around with bleepy, artificial sounds, he went for something more organic and real-worldy. That's why those TIE fighter screeches are a blend of a car on a wet road and an elephant. Blaster shots are simply the noise of a hammer hitting a guy-wire holding up a radio tower. The snow speeders' drone is traffic on a motorway.

While, for the people who live in George Lucas's universe, they're probably just as mundane as the whirr of a lawnmower, for us they're part of the *Star Wars* magic. Would the original have been such a hit if Darth Vader's lightsaber hadn't sounded so cool when he turned it on? ●

Rich is currently making lightsaber noises at his desk.

Fact Attack!

→ Ben Burtt rediscovered the "Wilhelm Scream" sound effect. The sound is named after a character in 1953's *The Charge At Feather River*.

→ Burtt played an Imperial officer in *Return Of The Jedi*, edited the *Star Wars* prequels and created the voice of Pixar robot WALL-E.

→ The first sound you hear on Ash's aptly titled debut album, the terrific 1977, released in 1996, is a TIE fighter screeching by.

→ Fancy playing around with *Star Wars* sounds for yourself? There's an excellent soundboard on the official site. bit.ly/starwarssound

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PAGE 45

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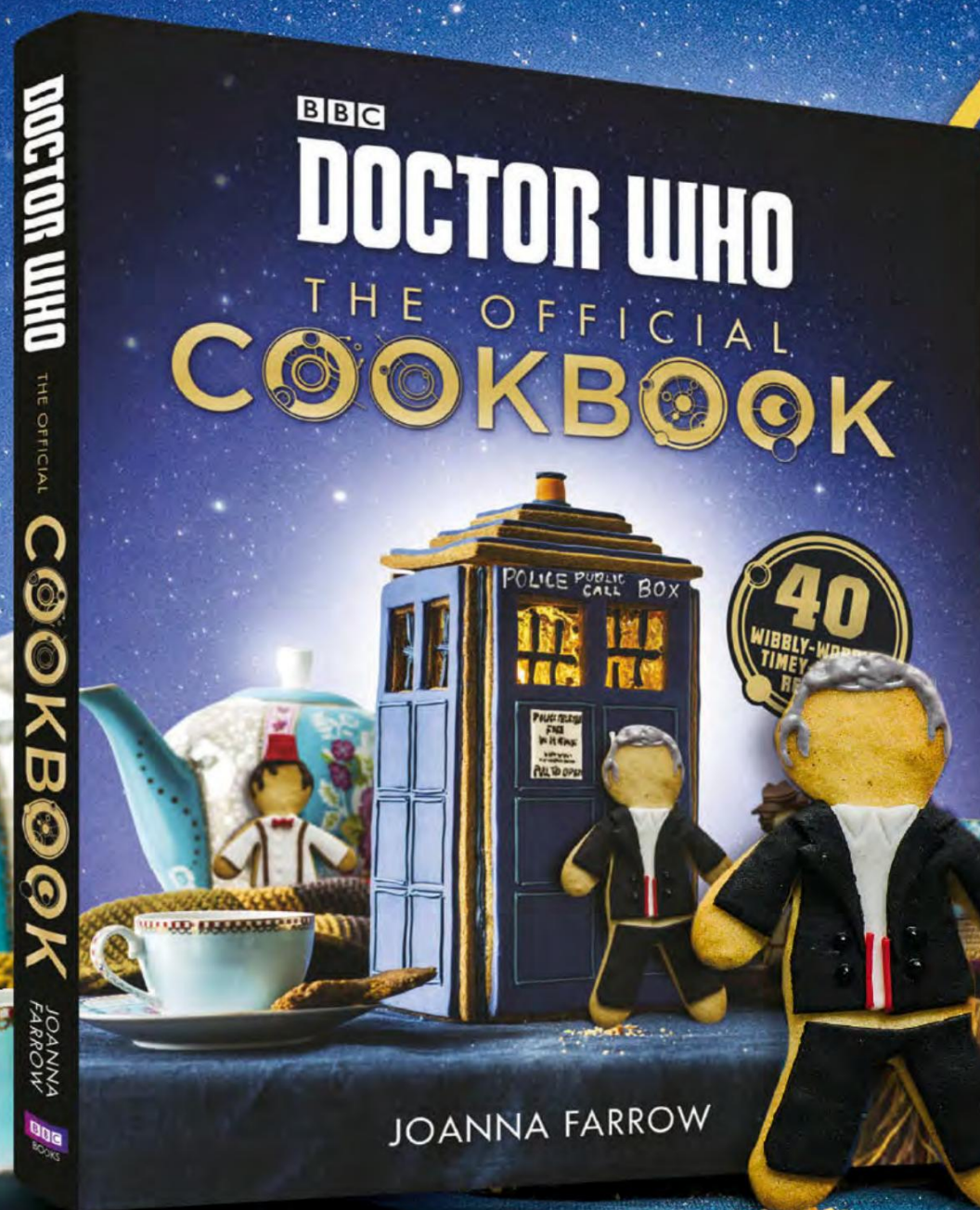
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